Chapter 18
Reminiscences

This chapter contains a selection of memories of a rather different Upton than it is today. Memories are just that; we each remember things in our own way and there is no claim here about the accuracy of the facts mentioned but it does make enjoyable reading.

Eddy Edison remembers…

My first recollection of Upton, as an evacuee, was arriving at the now defunct Upton Halt station. Climbing the big oak steps some 30 to 40 of us were met by Ladies & Gentlemen who ushered us into cars to St. Mary's School. We waited in the school before being allocated to our respective foster homes. I was allocated to Mr & Mrs Hughes and my two younger brothers to Mr & Mrs Griffiths next door. The two cottages, Nos: 1 & 2 Lawn Cottages were in Smoke Street, now known as Upton Lane. Coming from Liverpool, Upton seemed a thousand miles away.

Exploring our surroundings, we found that we had a big garden at the front of the house and the back door opened onto the main road – Upton Lane. There was a huge house next door which I believe was initially occupied by Sir Charles Cayzer and later by Sir Basil Nield and his sister Beryl. I often saw them strolling around the grounds both in uniforms.

Opposite to the cottage where I lived was Mr Powell who bred and slaughtered pigs. Next door to him was the Council Yard and behind this an allotment, Mr Collins, Headmaster of Chester's Blue Coat School, would bring boys to work on this allotment.

Sir John Frost of Frost Flour Mills lived at Upton Lawn which was a huge house, also on Upton Lane. During the war the house was let as flats. At the entrance to the grounds of the house, was the Lodge which is still in use. In my younger days this was occupied by the Misses Rivers. They were small in stature and were dubbed the seven dwarfs, though I am not sure how many of them there were. To the left of the big house were woods which stretched as far as the Wheatsheaf Inn. My friend, Frank Peris, and I built a den in the trees and also one made of bricks in which we would while the night away.

Around the corner in Demage Lane was the Vicarage and opposite this the local cobbler. The building is still there – now used as a garage. I got to know the old cobbler and would take him hot water to make his tea. Moving on past the cobblers was the refuse tip where Frank and I would

spend hours at night shooting at rats. Further on into Demage Lane there was a gate into a field where the soldiers from the RAMC would come to play football and cricket. If we children ever dared venture into the field the farmer, Mr Arthur Hinde, would chase us away; it was different in the summer when he needed help with his haymaking. Further on at the top of Demage Lane was a farm owned by Mr Davies, the farm is now part of the zoo.

The Zoo was the brainchild of Mr G Motteshead. When as a boy I met him, he was a huge man in stature with a walrus moustache. Often we would go down the 'Butterhill', top end of Flag Lane, past the Judges House and climb into the Zoo. We passed the 'cows', which we were told later were buffalo and bison. The elephant keeper was an Indian man Khanadas Karunadasa (known as Kay). He would take people for rides on his elephant. Two hours around the zoo in those days and you had seen everything.



Turning right at the top of Demage Lane and on into Flag Lane you came to Dick Jones and his Blacksmith's shop on the corner. Whilst at St Mary's school we would be taken to the blacksmith's to see him shoeing the horses. Coming along Flag Lane back into Heath Road, Brookfield Stores was opposite, on the corner of a small lane that led you to the playing fields and also to the back of the row of houses on Heath Road. I think the field was donated by Sir John Frost. Just beyond Brookfield Stores was the Wheatsheaf Inn.

The Scout hut was next to the Wheatsheaf. The Scoutmaster was a Scotsman called Mr Boyd who lived next to the Chemist Shop on Long Lane. At the age of ten I joined the 1st Upton Cubs then later, the 1st Upton Scout Troup.

The air raid shelter was located opposite the Wheatsheaf and during school we would have air raid drill when we would walk up to the shelter. One night the raid was particularly bad and my foster parents and I were on our way to the shelter when we heard a whirring noise followed by a loud bang. Next day we discovered there was a huge crater on the Golf course. It seems that the pilot had seen a spark from a train going along the line in the Bache area.

From the Wheatsheaf, it was a short walk down Heath Road to St Mary's School, opposite which was another wood that stretched nearly as far as Church Lane. A Miss Nickson had her riding school to the left of the school and the village hall was to the right. There were only two houses separated by a path next to the Village Hall. The path took you into Newton in the vicinity of St. Columba's Church. Before St Columba's was built, mass was held in the Village Hall. Then there were fields as far as the end of Upton (now Wealstone) Lane. The fields were owned by a Mr Jim Ithell whose farm was in Wervin. He had a team of Land Army girls to plough and sow crops for the war effort.

Half way along Wealstone Lane a gate led you through Upton Park to the Mill. I had a Saturday morning job at Dean's bakery putting the slit in the top of the bread and helping with deliveries.

On the other side of Heath Road is Church Lane and just past the Church on the left-hand side were four Army huts. These bordered the home of Sir Basil Nield. After the war one of the huts was purchased by the Secretary of the Upton British Legion, a Mr F Morris who lived in Demage Lane. It was taken down and erected where now stands the British Legion. My foster parents and I helped Mr Morris to scrub and clean it out to make it presentable. Two snooker tables were put in and an office sectioned off. This new building caused a lot of members to leave the Upton Men's Institute, still there on the corner of Caughall Road but now the Guide Headquarters. During the war this was a First Aid Station.



Inside the Post Office

I remember going into the Post Office in Mill Lane, run by Miss Nixon. It was a dark dismal little shop even though there was an open fire during the winter months. Whenever you went into the shop it smelled of the dog which seemed to live under the counter, it was usually chewing on a bone and when you went in, it would bark once, then go back to its bone.

Other things I remember are, the pond at the top of Marina Drive where we would see crested newts and frogs and beyond that a sand tip, giving us two in the village. Upton seemed to have two of everything at that time - sand tips refuse tips, blacksmiths (apart from the one in Flag Lane there was Mr Darlington, situated in the dip before the dale camp). After the war the ponds, sand and refuse tips were filled in with waste from a power station, before houses were built on them.

Joyce Cook remembers…

My earliest connection with Upton dates back to 1946 when I obtained a teaching post at St. Mary's School. After working as a Probationary Teacher in the heart of Liverpool, I was thankful to find myself in such a peaceful and pleasant little village. The whole of my career was to be spent in Upton and so it became my 'second home'.

Upton County Primary School (later know as Upton Manor, then Upton Heath) opened in 1951 and I worked there until I retired in 1980. This brand new school, filled with all the latest equipment, had a big Opening Ceremony. Afterwards the Director of Education escorted some of the important visitors around the new classrooms. He spotted my home-made xylophone (made from medicine bottles) played a tune and suggested that I should fill them with whiskey instead of coloured water, perhaps this was the beginning of my interest in the teaching of music!

In those days, I had no idea that my ancestors had been musical; I taught music because no-one else wanted to. When a visiting Inspector suggested that I should form a choir, I had to borrow library books in order to make a start. However, it was by entering Music Festivals and listening to adjudications that I became really interested. Each year, auditions were held (for members of the top classes) and I felt very sorry for those who could not sing in tune. So I made sure that there were other musical activities, playing instruments, composing, dancing and for the football-mad boys who could not be persuaded to learn the recorder, the Manor Morris Men.

During the 1950s, the 'News Chronicle', a popular daily national newspaper of the time, announced a special competition for schools. Each day, a picture of something of historical interest would be printed and children were encouraged to find something similar in their own town or

village. Since one of the first items was a new school we became interested. The competition, to make a book of findings, had been arranged by 'Big Chief I-Spy' whose little booklets such as 'I Spy Castles' and 'I Spy Seashells' had kept generations of children amused and occupied during long car journeys and holiday outings. We decided that our book should be called 'I Spy Chester' though we realised that some of the clues might be found in Upton. It was hard work but fun. Little groups of children would meet in the evenings and on Saturdays, making sketches and notes. Eventually our book was posted off to London and there was much rejoicing when a telephone call announced that we were in the top three entries for England and Wales. I was invited to Fleet Street to see the exhibition and to meet Big Chief I Spy. He was then invited to Upton to present gift books to the 'leavers'. The top class put on a performance of 'Hiawatha' and he enjoyed this so much that he fancied a repeat!



Big Chief I Spy came to visit

Later in the year he returned and we found a boy and a girl to guide him around the City Walls so that he could write an article for his newspaper. This led to a huge competition known as 'I Spy Chester' to be held on the Roodee. Sadly, on the appointed day it poured with rain and hundreds of competitors had to cram into the Drill Hall. Students from Chester College helped to mark the entry forms and the wonderful prizes, which had been stored at school, were presented by Bernard Breslaw, a TV personality of the 1950s.

Perhaps the most exciting event for any Manor Choir was in 1978 when the BBC sent a producer and Director to see if we might be suitable contestants for a forthcoming programme entitled 'A Good Sing'.

We were! A coach took us to Manchester and the boys were very excited when they spotted a famous footballer in the foyer! Eventually we found ourselves in the recording studio and when the word 'transmission' appeared in red lights I raised my arm and we sang 'Mairi's Wedding' and 'Mango Walk'. It was with great relief that we returned to our seats and held our breath as the international adjudicator reported '"Here was something quite remarkable – these little people singing totally in tune…..they sang with rhythm, attack and life…..everything they did was so vital….".

We were awarded 86 marks and had won the Children's contest, even though the opposition had been so formidable.



Joyce with her class watching 'A Good Sing'

More than all the excitements and successes, I remember the wonderful children, parents and staff at Upton Manor. As one ex-pupil noted on 'www.friendsreunited', 'they were halcyon days'.

Stan Whaley remembers …

I was allowed to start school before my fifth birthday in 1918 and thought it wonderful. This was easily arranged in that our two girl neighbours. Mabel Fletcher, aged 8, and Phyllis aged 6 were already walking there twice a day and they rather proudly took possession of me. They gave me much juvenile advice on what to do and what not to do - and for girls were surprisingly knowledgeable in such matters as the best sections of hedgerows to find birds nests and how to test the speed of approaching horses by putting your ear to the ground. The delightfully winding Upton Lane was bordered by tall trees all the way and as yet was almost completely undisturbed by cars.

Upton St Mary's C of E School was in the charge of the tall thin austere headmaster, Mr Hacker, although I don't think he ever spoke a single word to me. I was the concern of Miss Jones, teacher of the infants. I remember her as a small, mousy, fussy teacher who made me sit on the front row and must have regarded me with some suspicion.

I can recall only one incident during my stay under her jurisdiction. It was a handwork lesson and each pupil had been given a square piece of coloured paper and a pair of blunt scissors to cut it with. We were instructed to draw a circle inside the square and then to cut a fringe half an inch deep around the circumference of the circle. This must have taken approximately two minutes. But Miss Jones had disappeared and as we waited with increasing impatience for her return, and further instructions, we quickly became bored. Then as a diversion, the small bright boy who shared my desk suggested cutting off the fringe and throwing the bits at the boys in the next desk. This we did, and it was easy to cut another fringe so that teacher would not notice. So, to obtain more ammunition, we had to repeat the operation, and with all the class joining in, our pieces of paper were soon reduced to miserable scraps the size of a sixpence and there was a fair amount of litter on the floor. When Miss Jones finally did reappear she was furious and all the culprits were called out to the front to be caned. Because of my strategic position I was dealt with first and had to hold out my hand while she slapped it with a ruler. I am afraid that I laughed. There must be few children today who can claim that they were caned before their fifth birthday, at school!

Mum and Dad thought it highly desirable that we should attend church services regularly and from about 1924 onwards sister Norah and I went to Upton Parish Church every Sunday morning and Sunday school in the afternoons. The church was built in 1854 - the same year as our home, Mona Villa. The congregation was small but we came to know some of the regular worshippers quite well - Sir John and Lady Frost, Mr J H Haseldon and old Kenny Tyrer from Plas Newton.

The benign and venerable Reverend Wilfred Sparling was popular and respected and he took an interest in village people and affairs. After 1928 we came to know him well - and his tall, spindly, beaky-faced wife. On one cold chilly morning, when the interior of the sandstone church was even colder than usual, Norah puzzled me by fainting during the singing of the canticles. Mrs Sparling came out to sit with us in the porch as Norah recovered and then walked all the way home with us and I was surprised to find how human and sympathetic she was.

The well-intentioned, earnest, hard working superintendent of the Sunday school, Jimmy Haselden, simply could not cope with the gang of rude, mischievous and impudent village boys who came along week by week during the winter months simply to keep out of the cold and to seek as much fun as possible. They ragged poor Jimmy persistently and outra-

geously, and the more he pleaded with them to be sensible and well-behaved the more obstreperously they swore and fought between themselves.

I often wish that we had come to know Jimmy better, as he took a genuine interest in us. He also lived in the Park and seemed to enjoy our company as we walked home together. It must have been comforting to meet some fairly civilised children after the rough and tumble of the afternoon's wrestling. He told us tales about his civic duties, he was City Councillor for the St Oswald Ward and sheriff of Chester, about his ironmongers business in Delamere Street and about his business interests in Liverpool. It became his custom to invite us into his home for a few minutes to play in the parlour. This was after I had begun to help him out as Sunday school teacher and player of hymns.



Jimmy Haselden, Sheriff of Chester

For those involved, the Confirmation Service was impressive. A packed congregation saw the Bishop of Chester in all his regalia perform the rites and I felt suitably angelic as Wilf presented me, along with a number of other Upton urchins, all unusually clean and silent.

During my last 3 years in Upton I came to know Sparling well and to appreciate his qualities. He was grateful for my help with the Sunday school and encouraged me to practice on the Church organ. He prevailed upon Mr Westbury to let Madame Foden give me organ lessons and these I enjoyed immensely. Brother Don generously came along to 'blow' for me and on Good Friday 1930 and 1931 I accompanied the especially plaintive Good Friday Service. Rev. Wilf occasionally invited me into the huge library of his big vicarage and I was deeply impressed by the extensive shelves around the walls all filled with books. Proudly displayed over the door was the oar with which he had successfully rowed for Oxford in the Boat Race of 1876. Wilf presented me with an inscribed Prayer Book when we left in 1932.

Derek Barnett remembers…



St Mary's School

Naturally we had to go to school. This was a small, red brick Victorian building on the edge of the village. I remember the smell of chalk dust, of newly opened exercise books in which we wrote with 'Waverley' and 'Relief' nibs, and the fresh woody aroma of plain brown utility pencils. The headmaster, Mr Chidlow, was a strict but kind man in grey flannels and brown tweedy jacket with leather patches at the elbows. He took us for more advanced lessons as we got older and also for 'games' such as handball in the small rear playground. We wore coloured bands of red, green, blue or yellow across the shoulders like bandoliers to distinguish opposing teams.

The teachers were mostly elderly maiden ladies with their hair done up in buns. Miss Baker, whose fingers always seemed to be stained with red ink she used for marking our work, taught us reading, writing and arithmetic, and sometimes took us into the woods to learn nature study first hand by opening up horse chestnuts or dissecting wild flowers and showing us how they were pollinated by the bees. Then there was Mrs Houlbrook, who did her best to teach us a love of music. She would strike chords as she stood at the piano (we always wondered why on earth she didn't sit at the instrument) and then point to a boy or girl and fire the question "What key was that in?" We were sometimes allowed to sing as she played and the room would resound to the out-of-tune but lusty strains of 'Rose of England' 'Hearts of Oak' or 'Killarney'. Miss Williams was courting an army officer who would sometimes meet her at the school gate at four o'clock when they would stroll off arm in arm. We always giggled and thought it "soppy".

A popular game was 'Pie Crust' I have never heard of it being played in any other part of the country. A group of boys would make a human chain by bending forward from the waist and locking arms around the hips of the boy in front. The opposing side would run from behind and leap one after another on to the bent backs in much the same way as cowboys in the Westerns would jump on to their steeds from behind for a quick getaway. The idea of the game was to make the chain of backs give way by sheer weight.



Mum (Emily)
Reg (with Peggy), myself & Ken

A more hazardous game was called 'duckstone' and involved hurling fairly heavy stones at another on the ground as boys took turns trying to retrieve their own stones from around it. Hands were frequently bruised or chipped in this reckless pastime. Sometimes, in the middle of a game a fight would break out between a couple of boys. If Mr Chidlow happened to see the 'scrap' from his window he would rush out, drag the pugilists apart and hustle them inside for a caning.

Mr Chidlow did not object to our having a little fun but came down hard on anyone guilty of infractions of school rules, particularly when they concerned safely. One of these rules was never to interfere with the stirrup pumps and fire buckets placed in the cloakrooms in readiness for air raids. Well, one hot summer day, I and a fellow ruffian, now a respected builder in the Chester area, decided that the other pupils standing in line waiting for a singing lesson, needed cooling down, and while I was at the pump and buckets he manned the hose. The cloakroom was filled with hissing water and the cries of boys and girls running hither and thither to escape the inevitable wetting.

Suddenly there was a silence. There stood Mr Chidlow, eyes blazing with anger and head dripping from the spray which had caught him as he opened the door to investigate the din. He cuffed both of us soundly around the ears and administered a vigorous and, on reflection, deserving caning for that particular outrage.

We rejoiced at anything which took us out of the classroom, especially when we were taken in a crocodile to see geography or other documentary films in the village hall. Surprising though it might sound to today's more sophisticated children, we were taken several times to the village's one and only telephone box to learn how to use the phone! Even more popular were the times when we descended into the damp-gloom of the school shelters to learn the drill for air raids or gas attacks, carrying our gas masks in square cardboard boxes with string shoulder straps. Sometimes the departure from the schoolroom was purely imaginary. This was when, about twice a week, we listened to the BBC's 'History for Schools' programme on the school's radio.

American military convoys frequently passed along Long Lane, the main road which we had to cross on our way back to school after lunch. They seemed never-ending and regretfully, made us late for lessons. The GI's would invariably throw lots of good things to us as they went by – chocolate, chewing gum, cigars and cigarettes in particular. They probably thought we would give the latter to our mums or big sisters! However, when we finally got back to school Mr Chidlow always asked us to turn out our pockets "Just to be sure you haven't got anything that boys shouldn't have. I know what these Americans are". We were allowed to keep all the chocolate and gum. "But I'll have to confiscate the cigarettes and cigars," he'd say with mock solemnity. We all knew what that meant.

The Americans had a 'clean rubbish' tip at one end of the village. Well, it might have been rubbish to them but to us it was a source of pleasure…and much needed income. "I've found a fountain pen!" "Just look at this cigarette case"…"Who wants a super flashlight".

We also did newspaper rounds, which yielded a few shillings a week from Mason's newsagent's shop, the one from which we obtained our illicit 'smokes'. Mr Mason was a kind, hearty man who always doled out a few sweets to his boys before they left the shop on their rounds at 6.30 each morning. Plum 'rounds' were those which included one of the three or four army camps where it became traditional for the lucky paper boy to be given porridge and bacon and egg alongside the soldiers at breakfast in the mess hall. These rounds were the preserve of older boys who benefited particularly at Christmas time when they experienced the delight of being served Christmas dinner.

At home during air raids our family slept in bunks which my father built under the stairs while on leave once. Later we were given an indoor Morrison Shelter. This had a sheet steel top and corner posts and steel mesh sides. At first we got out of bed to use the shelter only when the sirens wailed to herald an attack. But we began so to enjoy the novelty of sleeping downstairs in it that we never bothered to go upstairs at all. Upton must have been on the flight path of German planes heading for Liverpool to bomb the docks, and only about half a mile across the fields at the back of our house was a Royal Artillery ack-ack battery. At night we watched the searchlights stabbing the sky. When they picked out a German plane they would open up, rocking houses and rattling windowpanes. Next morning there might be the wreckage of a plane in the surrounding fields, once we children were allowed by the services to view one of these. It must have been considered as a boost to the morale!

Our association with the local army camp lasted right through VE Day (Victory in Europe) and VJ Day (Victory in Japan) when celebration parties were held there. By that time the camp was much different. In place of tents were wooden huts with hot and cold water laid on. I think it was towards the end of hostilities that German and Italian prisoners of war in

the area were allowed out to work on the farms and spend afternoons and evenings at weekends walking around the village and lanes. They wore British soldiers' uniforms dyed dark brown and with a large pale blue circular patch on the back for identification. Curiosity got the better of us children and we were soon on friendly terms with them. We spent hours talking about their own countries and learning words and phrases of their languages. The Italians used to make rings for us from sixpenny and shilling pieces.

How fast the days of boyhood fly! But the memories linger on to warm and cheer the heart as the years go by.

Hilda Shenton remembers…

Walter and his son Frank (my husband) took over Moston Nurseries in 1952. The nurseries had been owned by Mr Charles Dandy, who lived in a big house on the nursery but which is now separated from it by the A41. He gave up the nurseries when he reached 91 years old and couldn't manage them any longer.



The stall on Chester Market

Walter's father had been a farmer at Stamford Bridge and Walter was chauffeur/gardener. Walter could see the potential in opening a café beside the farm to serve passing trade, such as truck drivers and day trippers, with refreshments. He then started growing tomatoes and some vegetables and buying fruit, such as oranges and bananas from Liverpool, to

sell in the café. The café was sold after the war when they bought Moston Nurseries. In taking on the business Walter also inherited the stall on Chester market that went with it and the two employees were more then happy to stay on and work for Walter. The gardener, Mac, tended the seeds and seedlings, working a lot of the time in the greenhouses In his youth he had played water polo for Chester and in later years he still cycled from his home in Handbridge to Moston each day. The other employee, Albert Futcher, prepared things for the market stall. Along with the land came the very old truck, nicknamed 'Charlie' it was a 1936 Morris Commercial with a Cheshire number plate CFM 1

When they moved into the premises at Moston, the land was covered in fruit trees, it seems that any trees that Mr Dandy did not sell at market, he brought home and planted. The trees were very old and not at all productive so had to be removed and the land converted back to market garden standard.

Walter's son, Frank, had served his time as a carpenter and joiner before joining the army in 1939, where he stayed for the duration of the war. After the death of his father in the early 1960's Frank took over the nursery.

They grew flowers and vegetables for the market in Chester and did a good trade in cuttings and seedlings which customers bought to cultivate at home. It wasn't too long before they acquired a stall on Ellesmere Port Market and added two more greenhouses to the six they already owned. In the springtime, which was the busiest time of the year for them, they employed up to six women from Upton to prick out the seedling bedding plants, I would also help as did Frank's two sisters Tiny and Audrey, either on the stall or in the nurseries. When our son Ian left school he worked full time in the business, driving a van, and when there were any problems with the vans, or with any of the machinery, our younger son Christopher repaired them as he was a mechanic in Chester at that time. It was truly a family business.

Frank died in 1982 and following this Ian came to live in the nursery bungalow. Our sons Ian, Chris, David and Peter look after things now growing and selling Christmas trees.

Bill Morgan Remembers…

Our family moved to Plas Newton Lodge around 1925/6 when I was approximately 2 years old. My father, William Morgan, was promoted to head gardener, his employers at the time were Mr Alfred and Mrs Ida Tyrer of Plas Newton. Mr Tyrer was a solicitor in Liverpool and a very keen Polo player. Other staff employed at Plas Newton included 5 indoor household servants, three gardeners, a gardener/farmhand and a chauffeur/groom.

Plas Newton and the grounds were made up of 8 acres of arable land and grazing, lawned areas to the west and south of approximately ½ acre, a putting green to the west in front of the house; a Japanese garden with its own miniature bridges with streams and waterfall and arches and figurines – all of which were shipped directly from Japan. To the north and west stood their pride and joy, the walled kitchen garden with almost half an acre of heated greenhouses (coke fired) and also the stable yard and horse boxes. A large orchard was also the home for a variety of poultry and indeed a fox on numerous occasions. The saddle room in the stables held the most fantastic aroma of polish and the apple storage room had its own exotic perfume. A cemetery for the numerous dogs that lived a life of luxury on the estate was for their demise together with suitably inscribed wooden crosses. Our dog (Peg), a red setter which lived to the good age of fifteen, was buried there.



Alfred & Ida Tyrer with head gardener William Morgan

Garden parties were held on the front lawns and on occasions the General Railway Station brass band provided entertainment. A marquee was the focal point from which to obtain free drinks and cigarettes.

The whole of the Plas Newton Estate was owned by Mr A E C Lloyd-Jones who lived lower down the road at Newton Cottage. He also owned a large proportion of the style (or stile) fields which ran from Plas Newton Lane right across to Upton Village Hall and St Mary's School. Beef cattle were shipped in from Ireland and unloaded at the General Railway Station. From the cattle pens they were driven up Hoole Road and along Newton Lane to eventually arrive in the style fields, having wreaked havoc on many private gardens and lawns on the way.

The six years spent at Upton school leave me with lots of happy memories. Our headmaster Mr Chidlow and my teacher Mrs Baker were so very clever and understanding and worked very hard to cope with classes of 40 pupils and upwards. Getting across the style fields with books and egg butties for lunch was a challenge and an art, not only of dodging the bulls which might be grazing but also to cut down on the time by avoiding the styles and leaping over the adjoining hedges. The gaps in the hedges got lower and lower as time went by and my Mother used to say she knew when to put the tea on because she could hear my shouting long before I arrived.

At the age of twelve I passed the necessary entrance examinations for Love Street Secondary Modern School as it was known in those days. For that achievement I acquired a second hand bicycle. The road from our house down to Newton Corner was routed through the walls, at the entrance to Newton Hall, and down quite a sharp hill to Wealstone Lane. I very often used to meet Mr Kenny Tyrer, who lived at Newton Hall, taking his five dogs to Picton for their morning exercise. On these occasions I was expected to touch my cap, dismount, stroke the dogs and hand over my homework for scrutiny, He was a very keen cyclist and on one particular morning he informed me that I was to call at the Hall on my way home from school in order to inspect his new bicycle that was being delivered from France that very day. The maid who answered the front door told me that I was expected and I was ushered into the courtyard where a spanking new bicycle was standing upside down. At the point of me giving it my well rehearsed praises he informed that it had to go back to the factory. "Surely not" "Why"? He spun the front wheel and eventually it stopped with the valve appearing at the top of the wheel. "You see, my boy, it should have stopped at the bottom, and so it proves that the wheels are not properly balanced". And indeed, back it went!

The Firs was an Army establishment during the war and sentries were posted at the entrance. It was not unusual to be challenged "Halt! who goes there" and having to 'advance' and produce your identity card. In the early days of the raids our family scrambled into the shelter, together with blankets and flasks but my youngest brother developed whooping cough during the night and thereafter my mother decided that under the kitchen table would be as safe as the shelter and so it remained that way.

When my eldest brother & I joined the forces in 1941-2 my parents moved down the road from The Lodge to Plas Newton Cottage (the house next door). On arriving home in 1946 I was greeted by flags and bunting hanging from all the windows. Whilst serving in the Royal Navy I was drafted to a new ship which was lying in Liverpool; this entitled me to a 24 hour pass. I arrived at Chester Railway Station in the early hours of the morning and rather than wait until it got light I decided to walk home together with kitbag and hammock. The blackout made the walls at

Newton Hall even darker than usual and halfway through I was hit by something that must have laid me cold for a short while. Feeling around and finally recovering my luggage I discovered that I had hit or had been hit by one of three carthorses which had got out of Miss Darcy's field close by and it was in a greater panic than I was.

At the end of the war German prisoners were employed on the farm at Newton Cottage and Polish families were housed in wooden huts on the style fields.

David Hooper remembers….



Vol. III. No. 48 JANUARY 1, 1942

THE AEROPLANE SPOTTER

FOR THE ALERT

ALTERNATE THURSDAYS

3P

Incorporating the Bulletins of The Royal Observer Corps Club and The National Association of Spotters' Clubs

Edited by PETER G. MASEFIELD M.A. (Eng.) Camb.; A.F.R.Ae.S.

OF ALL NEWSAGENTS OR DIRECT FROM THE PUBLISHERS, POSTAGE PAID

AN AMERICAN IN BRITAIN—The Lockheed 12 of the U.S. Air Attaché flying in this country.

A NEW YEAR of the War begins and with it much of hope and confidence for the future. Enormous changes happened in the past year of War. A year from now should see Victory well in sight.

Perhaps the most important happening during the past year, apart from the entry of the United States and Japan into the conflict, has been the smashing defeat of the Luftwaffe in Russia. As a result, the Royal Air Force has now numerical equality with the enemy and a small but definite superiority in quality, which will doubtless superiority of its views there can be no shadow of doubt.

The fact that the enemy is no longer able to put more aeroplanes into the air than we, does not mean that we will not have further heavy raids on this country. We have enormous targets in the Ruhr and elsewhere, and the defence of the enemy still has the inner and thus the shorter lines of communication. He is able to move his forces more quickly and can establish local air superiority at a number of points. The fight will still be hard and stern and it is certain to be long.

Much has been done in the past year to improve the defensive, but more remains to be done, particularly in co-ordination of instruction, in the circulation of information and the attainment of accuracy in general and in detail.

A year ago the first number of THE AEROPLANE SPOTTER was published. Support has been from the start, and still continues to be, the circulation of the maximum of information with the highest standard of accuracy that it is within our power to command.

Speed and accuracy are the two essentials, combined with an attitude to prevent the first is a success which will make them of the greatest value and easy to remember. Unfortunately, the paper shortage has caused a set-back in that we are at present able to publish only half the amount of information at half the frequency. Perhaps we can hope for better things in this direction in the future.

There is still much still to learn in this country, there is no doubt that Great Britain leads the World in aircraft recognition. Already there is evidence that we can be of service to our American Allies in this essential task. In time the American will doubtless be able to repay the help we give them in this direction, but we are sure that they will do it in extraordinary originality and ingenuity. We hear that Walt Disney has already been commissioned by the U.S. Navy to prepare 20 recognition films on foreign aircraft. The results should be both instructive and entertaining. We trust that these aids to instruction will be made available over here.

THE AEROPLANE SPOTTER FORTNIGHTLY

We regret that the paper shortage compels us to publish THE AEROPLANE SPOTTER fortnightly until further notice. Thus the next issue will appear on Thursday, January 15, 1942

I came from Hoole with my family when I was not yet seven years old. Our house in Hamilton Street had only tiny gardens and there was only the park for play under the strict eyes of the park keeper. Coming to Upton meant larger gardens and fields everywhere for recreation. Fortunately my parents seemed to agree with the advice "Better drowned than duffers. If not duffers won't drown" from 'Swallows and Amazons'.

My interest in pond life meant that I fell into many local ponds which contained caddis and dragonfly larvae and other exciting creatures. We went on walks and knew footpaths for miles around. Careful to avoid growing crops we roamed almost anywhere we chose.

My friends and I often played in the sand quarry off Sandpit Lane (Upton Lane). There were cliffs of say 3 feet of soil and clay on top of about 15 feet of hard sand. We discovered that narrow ledges could be dug out of the sand and it was great fun to extend them at different levels. However we decided to try constructing caves and the inevitable happened, I was about a yard inside when it collapsed, at the same time I jumped safely to the bottom of the cliff where plenty of loose sand broke my fall.

When war broke out in 1939, we lads in the Demage Lane area formed a 'Royal Upton Regiment' as a kind of Home Guard. No uniforms but a light blue flag made form an old cloth flour bag; no weapons but sticks

and clods of clay. We had the 'Aeroplane Spotter' to identify enemy aircraft and collected shrapnel after air raids.

When evacuees arrived, to our respective regret, they provided a substitute for Nazis and there were a few battles before a kind of unofficial truce was called. Eventually we played football together, usually on the field now covered by Daleside using goal posts put there by the RAMC from Moston. We watched the RAMC team at weekends. The field was also used by cows with mucky results when we played.

What else did we do? Most winters were cold so we went sledging on Butter Hill. At home we played board games like 'Invasion', 'Buccaneer', 'L'Attaque' and 'Monopoly'. School pressures were minimal and we had a wonderful time in spite of rationing and the war!

Dolores Pickstock remembers…

I came to live in Upton in 1935/6 and attended St. Mary's School. Mrs Baker was a good teacher and I learned a love of nature study and botany from her lessons as well as neat needlework. Her daughter Shirley was my best friend.

Mrs Baker's class was the smaller room, divided from the big classroom by a heavy moveable wooden screen, always referred to as 'The Partition'. The big classroom was where Miss Williams and Mr Chidlow taught. Mr Chidlow was a very knowledgeable Roman scholar and could be side-tracked from a lesson with a well chosen question about what the Romans did in Chester. We had some artefacts, probably loaned by the museum, on the window sills. One was a terracotta brick stamped with XX Legion. Mr Chidlow was always keen for us to go to the cinema if there was a film from which he thought we would learn something. One was 'Elephant Boy' and another was 'Fire Over England' but he used to go crackers if we called the Gaumont 'Gormont' "It's Go-mont, Go-mont" he would shout. He was very keen on correct pronunciation.

In the summer we did PE in the little playground at the back and learned country dancing to a scratchy gramophone but the boys did a very nifty 'sword dance' whereby they interwove flat laths and ended up with a six-pointed star, a bit like a Star of David. Some of the boys in the class were Ian Scrambler, Fred Roden, Alan Davies and Frank Halliwell (son of the construction family).

The winters always seemed very cold with frost and snow lasting a long time. One year we built a snow house on the front playground by rolling a big ball of snow, some of us scooped out the inside, while others piled snow on the outside. After a couple of days it was big enough for several children to stand up in. Each classroom had a big iron stove and in the winter the crates of school milk were placed around it to take the chill off.

Every Christmas someone came into school present a Cinematograph show. One film was called 'North of the Fifty Five' about monkeys dressed as Canadian Mounties riding Alsatians and on the last day of term before Christmas we were given an apple and an orange to take home.

Shirley and I had a desk at the back, between the door into the infant's room and the door to the cloakroom. There was a single row of desks heading for the blackboard apart from the main class, creating an aisle. There were a few of us older girls Sheila Morris, Pam Rowlands, Florence Prior, Joyce Roberts, Margaret Ashcroft, Marion Teague and Ada Woodwood. We girls at the back must have looked sometimes as if we weren't paying attention because the call would come across the room "Wake up there, down in Sleepy Hollow".



Mrs Baker with daughter Shirley

The woods across from the school we called 'The Plantation', which must have been the perimeter of the grounds of the Frost's mansion. The daughter of the family organised a Rose Queen procession one year and issued us with pastel shades of silky fabric to get our dresses made. Another time there was a Pageant in Chester with all the schools involved. We made our own costumes for that, which were yellow, I think we were part of a rainbow in the background.

Every November 11th we went to Upton Cross and laid a wreath. As a WW1 veteran Mr Chidlow was very strict about how we behaved and we had to show great respect. Once when we had been there he told us about a sandstone block that was situated behind the cross. It had a hollow in it about the size of a sugar basin and he called it the Plague Stone. He said that during the plague, the townspeople used to come out to the village to buy farm produce and would put their money in the hollow which was filled with vinegar (for sterilising).

We seemed to have a lot more respect for grown-ups in those days and I remember Rev. T O C East's Friday RE lesson very well. Another notable resident in Upton at the time was Sidney Gustard the organist, who used to play on the wireless a lot as well as playing at the cinema in Chester.

In Newton Lane in the fields, where the houses are now, was a lovely old Victorian cottage where a jolly farmer named Parry lived. Across the road from there, on the edge of Dicksons nursery was a smallholding, the man's name was Frank Morris. The gentleman was usually the MC for the whist drives and dances and during the war gave rabbits as prizes but you had to skin them yourself.

Faichney's were the coach people. They bussed scholars in from Wervin, Stoke and Stanney and took us once a week to Hoole and Newton school for cookery and the boys to woodwork. I also remember Mrs Houlbrook supervising craft lessons and the boys making stools with woven seats. When the war came Mr Chidlow's front garden was turned over to vegetables and the boys worked hard there and the girls did the weeding.

For a few weeks, during the bombing of Merseyside, the siren blew at dinnertime every day, when a solitary German reconnaissance plane came over to see how much damage they had caused at Liverpool docks or to see if there were any convoys in. On the way to the school air raid shelter, if you looked up, you could see the plane like a dot in the sky, with little puffs of smoke following it because the guns were firing at it. In the shelter was a tea chest full of balls of wool and knitting needles and we had to pick one up as we went in. We were supposed to be knitting blanket squares but I always seemed to get someone else's bad piece of knitting and spent my time putting dropped stitches right. It was not long before the all clear went and we had to go back into school and continue with our lessons.

Mr Chidlow warned us never to play near a pit that was fenced off (near where Alpraham Crescent is now) as it was a quicksand pit. Supposedly there was a moving river of sand that started at Parkgate and continued under the sandstone shelf that our part of the county sits on, then surfaced again in a field at Backford where the commercial sandpit was situated. It ran under what is now the A41 on the village side of Hoole roundabout and when they worked on the road the contractors had to sink concrete 'mattresses' (this was the way Mr Chidlow described it) reinforced with metal rods. One day many years later, the roads were being dug up and I could see these concrete slabs. Mr Chidlow came to mind and I remembered the interesting thing he told us. He was a lovely learned gentleman and I'm sure many of his ex-pupils remember him with great affection.