

Recollections of the Green Path area

My memories are from about 1940 to the early 1950's.

When I was born we lived on Cromwell Road and my granny and grandad lived on Aldcliffe road. I was a pre-war baby and my father was in the armed forces and my mother had my sister and me to care for. I had asthma badly, and you couldn't get medication, and granny used to say 'he needs fresh air'. She used to take me out in the pushchair along Aldcliffe Road, up Aldcliffe and round along Kendal Pad fields. So granny used to say 'we've been past Pony Wood' so that's how I knew it was called that. And we'd pick wild flowers, you were allowed to pick wildflowers then you're not now, and we'd put them in a book that she kept in her bag. There was no television and radio was a luxury you listened to at night so to occupy ourselves we'd press them and we'd mount them in a book and I had to write their names and spell them properly and put where they grew and when they were flowering. And this, I never realised, it came back to me in later years, is why I know all my wild flowers. So these are my earliest memories.

When I lived on Cromwell Road I was at Dallas Road primary school; we walked down Dallas Road and at the bottom of Cromwell Road there was a corrugated metal gate through to the football field. At the back of the houses on Aldcliffe Road [near to Upper Sowerholme] there was an old barn of Lancaster stone, with a slate roof, whitewashed inside, where Loxam kept his agricultural machinery, near to where there were big stone slabs over Lucy brook; that's what we used for our changing room.

Dallas Road playing field was terrible. The football field wasn't flat it was a bit like, was a little bit like that [undulating] and you tried to play football on it. The cattle were moved off for us to play. It was marked out; we had football posts, the lot. But if it was winter it was boggy, nearly like a swamp, you had your football boots on, you got muddy up to your knees. It was murder, [not level or dry] and in those days there were no showers, you got dressed and, your legs, you wore short trousers you went back to school your legs covered in mud.

My son was at Dallas Road in the late 1960's and he remembers the playing field and the barn used as a changing room.

The other playing field was, you go along Aldcliffe Road till you get opposite Haverbreaks bridge turn right down that lane and there was a football field down there which was the Lads Club playing field. I didn't play for the Lads club but I used to go and watch them play.

As I said I lived on Cromwell Road; in those days we had steam trains. On the railway, where the top of Cromwell Road meets Aldcliffe Road, there was a pumping house for the water for the steam trains; it was a red brick building about 15 ft by 10 ft. [Now a level area with trees and a seat]. The water from Lucy brook was pumped up for the steam trains to take up. Then Lucy brook continued at the back of Cromwell Road to Carr House farm. And then if you go along the Long Pads you cross a bridge over Lucy brook that eventually goes into the river Lune at Freeman's Meadow.

We used to get frogspawn and tadpoles out of Lucy Brook, near the barn that we used for changing rooms [Upper Sowerholme], and watercress, but we never ate it because it was contaminated from the cattle grazing there.

When I was about 10 we moved to Aldcliffe Road. There was a lane behind the houses on Aldcliffe Road that used to go to the back of Miss Bleasdale's garden; there was a stone arch with a door in it. Miss Bleasdale was the daughter of Bleasdale's butchers which were famous butchers in Lancaster. They had an L shaped garden, which ran along behind all the other houses right to the end, with fountains, a gazebo and a summer house, which originally had been a coaching house. Miss Bleasdale's gardener, Mr Mills, who looked after her, because she was a spinster, used to stop little boys from playing in the garden.

My mother's next door neighbour was Dr Jenkins, GP, and at the end of his garden that field was a field for cattle and it's now a mass of tall rushes and that was also boggy [Upper Sowerholme].

All the land at the bottom of Haverbreaks, along the canal, was fattening meadows for cattle; all the way to Aldcliffe Lodge. I got in to trouble off my mother for leaving the front gate open because all the cattle, and the sheep, from Aldcliffe and the Haverbreaks fattening meadows were driven down Aldcliffe Road to market and for slaughter. Never mind the traffic! They used to put a guard on Cromwell Road and Brook Street to make sure none of them got down there and they were driven across Penny Street Bridge to the auction and slaughter house [now a car park] and the muck and the cow claps!

The footbridge over the canal, from Ripley Heights to Aldcliffe Road, was a gangway of a ship.

I used to play Robin Hood in Pony Wood with friends from Cromwell Road and from Dallas Road School; from being a little boy it's always been Pony Wood. And when we were older we used to play kiss and catch with the girls.

We had bikes and we used to cycle to Aldcliffe Lodge then we'd cycle down the Long Pads to come out at Edenbreck farm cottage. You passed a wood which I didn't know until I joined Fairfield Association; I never knew that was called Little Wood.

I recall the concrete wall and the tree alongside it, I climbed it as a kid, gnarled it was; I was upset when it went rotten and came down.

At that time the Long Pads was a very narrow path with very high hawthorn hedges. One of the things that the Fairfield Association has done is improve the Long Pads because when August came you couldn't go down because of stinging nettles and you know when grass grows long and when it got wet you'd get wet through. Now, they keep it cut.

The Long Pads, or Kendal Pads, was a byway going back to the doomsday book, it's that old. And it linked Lancaster priory with Cokersands Abbey near Cockerham; one of the rumours was it was an ancient road to Kendal; nothing to do with it. It's called Kendal Pads for one reason; Lancaster has a canal but we never had narrow boats. They were broad beamed boats and the last one was the Lady Fiona, it used to be on the canal at White Cross and it used to do trips and it used to take up the whole width of the canal and it was towed by a horse. And the reason they were big boats is there were no locks and you only need narrow boats for locks. When roads were bad and the land hadn't been drained properly you needed to get from Preston to Kendal so they had what they called the fast packet boats, which were narrow boats, one of them being the Waterwitch, which is why the pub on the canal is called the Waterwitch, that ran from Preston to Kendal in so many hours but they had to have exchange of horses so as you come off the canal down the Long Pads at Aldcliffe Lodge all those fields were where they kept dozens of horses where they rested and fed and that's why it got its name Kendal Pad fields, because it was the Kendal Packet; Kendal

Paddocks. If you walk from Aldcliffe Lodge along the canal to Deep Cutting and you look at the hedge in autumn, when there are no leaves on the hedge, you'll see stone posts every now and again because the fields there were also for the canal horses.

On the Pad fields you used to get pewits [lapwings], every year. The Orchard was a hay meadow.

So we'd cycle down the Pads until we got to Edenbreck. I recall that Edenbreck was one enormous house [1 and 2 Edenbreck] with massive gardens and peacocks. I think originally the drive was a coaching drive and that there was a coach house and tennis courts. William and Edgar Pinches Grocers merchants lived there; their premises were down King Street; it was a warehouse. My mother went to school with Nellie and Rene Pinches. The two ladies were spinsters, they lived to 90 odd, both of them, my mother played bridge with Rene.

Then we cycled past Edenbreck Farm cottage; which was white washed. There were pig sties; as a little boy I would look in and watch the pigs.

We cycled past the bottom of Piggy Lane; it was narrow, rough gravel; water poured down there in the rain and you walked up it to Gifford's farm [Abraham Heights farm] and there were hedges on each side, no railings.

Near there was Longlands, a big house, it was a 17 bed hospital, when you had been in the Infirmary for surgery then you went to Longlands, a convalescent home, post op, for the NHS. Prior to that it was a private home.

And then you came on to Sunnyside Lane. Sunnyside Lane *was* a lane then; it wasn't tarmacked it was pot holed, full of puddles, with high hawthorn hedges on both sides. There was a tennis court I think about where Sunnyside Close is now. And then in the 1950's they started building [Sunnyside Lane and Close] and I was annoyed because it was destroying the countryside. The first dwelling we came to after Edenbreck Farm cottage was Sunnyside House; it had an orchard which the local lads went scrumping in. And next to Sunnyside House, it's very interesting because, there is a little cottage. Opposite Sunnyside House was the old fashioned house, near the triangle of land, [The Coach House].

And then you kept going up Sunnyside Lane, at the back of the Ashfield Avenue Houses, and I remember Fairfield Hall being a private house; I think it was owned by Wingate Saul who was a QC who practiced on the Isle of Man and he died in Lancaster on Fairfield and they named Wingate Saul Road after him. It has also been a hotel, before it was a nursing home, run by Spanish lady and often referred to as the Spanish Hotel; the jury stayed there for the trial of the Birmingham Six.

Then going up Westbourne Road, past The Knoll, after those big houses, once you got to the top of Cannon Hill the last habitation was Gifford's farm, very clean, good farmer, his wife loved plants and she had tubs of flowers and hanging baskets. Then the road ended and it was a gravel track down towards Freemans Wood. It was a lane with hedges on each side and at the bottom was another farm, Brookholme farm, Lewis's; I got my manure delivered from there for the allotment.

Thinking of the farms, I remember when I was a boy the milk being delivered by the Bennet's that farmed Arna Wood farm, further on from Aldcliffe. They came round on a pony and trap and the milk was in churns. You took a jug out and they scooped milk into it. Then you covered it with a

crocheted top, weighted down with glass beads, and put it in the cellar to keep cool. Later it was delivered by Airey's, from Aldcliffe farm, in old fashioned milk bottles with cardboard tops. When I was married and lived on Redvers Street Adrian Gifford was our milkman.

Going back to Aldcliffe Lodge I'll tell you something about there. Opposite the Lodge there is a triangle of a wood by the canal with, I think they are, horse chestnut trees. A very enterprising man opened a cabin, with a hatch, there. There used to be a wall around the cabin, like an old rockery, in that triangle, opposite Aldcliffe Lodge adjacent to the canal. He was a retired police man, his name was Ashton Kenworthy, he owned the grocery store in Aldcliffe Square which we referred to as 'Open All Hours', it's now a chip shop [The Quays, previously Aldcliffe Stores]. From the cabin he used to sell chocolate teacakes, pop and cups of tea which for boys was fantastic. We used to eat a chocolate teacake and then we timed each other who could cycle fastest from Aldcliffe Lodge to Edenbreck farm, down the Long Pads. And you got 'cheated' if you met somebody (because they slowed you down). Then we came back via the Short Pads [the narrow path between the Girls Grammar school playing field and the railway line]. We cycled hell for leather from the cabin to Edenbreck farm then took our time coming round the Short Pads. Then we re-met up again at Aldcliffe lodge, had another chocolate teacake and did it all over again.

We also used to play in Dawson's Estate, the grounds of Aldcliffe Hall, all of it was walled and it was a forest. The graveyard was white chippings and it had sort of marble or granite columns with a chain and we used to trespass and it must have been the gamekeeper used to chase us and I know you are sensitive at a young age but we used to swear blind it was haunted 'cause you'd go in there and it had an eerie feeling. I remember being very upset when they knocked Dawson's house down; all those trees had to go; there was a heck of a big wood up there where the Oaklands estate houses are now. And the wildlife in there: hares, rabbits, stoats, field mice, hedgehogs.

We used to go up to Aldcliffe on picnics 'cause if you go along Aldcliffe Hall Drive, opposite the end, straight across Aldcliffe Hall Lane, there is a little lane that runs down to the Lune and nobody had cars and there was a war on and there was a little triangle area down there where we put the rugs and had our picnics and you could play rounder's and French cricket. You had to be very careful that you didn't go after wet weather, 'cause when you got down to the bottom you could be up to your knees, but now they've put a board walk; there are stone steps off the railway lane down to it.

John Cheshire