

Memories of Withington from WWII onwards

The interviewee, whose early memories are of Withington during WWII, wishes to remain anonymous

Interview: April 10th 2015 by Ruth Shepherd

This is about the house which was bombed on Parkville Road – a house on the left of the passage as you face Parkville Road. That was bombed in 1940. It was bombed, I think, during the night and we had an air raid shelter in the garden. I was only about 4, and I remember during the war when there was an air raid my father used to come up to my bedroom and carry me down outside into the air raid shelter. And it was particularly fierce the bombing one night and there was this terrific explosion which we heard and my mother, my father and I were in the shelter. My mother was very distressed because she thought it was so loud it must have been our house which was bombed. When the all-clear siren went the next morning, my father went out of the shelter – it was underground and there were steps down and steps out - and I remember him saying, "It's alright, love, the house is still here." We found out it was a house in Parkville Road and also a house in Arnfield Road – number 4 Arnfield Road - which was occupied by people called Gadsby. They were in the shelter and they were not harmed. I don't know what happened to the people in the Parkville Road house which was bombed. I don't know whether they were killed or what.

What time of year did this happen?

Probably the Blitz was December 1940 wasn't it? That's when all the bombing, the heavy bombing in Manchester occurred in December 1940. So I imagine it was then. I'm not absolutely sure of that but I would think it would be during what was called the Blitz. After the war the house was rebuilt. A new house was built. It's not quite the same style as the other houses in Parkville Road. It was bought by a Mr Cross who was a chemist and had a chemist's shop. The chemist's shop was at the top of Cotton Lane where it joins Kingsley Road. He had a chemist's shop there. I believe Mr Cross bought the house when it was rebuilt. That's all I know about the house. I don't know anything about the house in Arnfield Road except its occupants were called Gadsby. They were in the shelter. They were not killed, the people. That house was rebuilt after the war. You can see it's not quite the same style as what we call the Hartley houses – it's called the Hartley estate. The house I live in was not built by Hartley, but all the other houses down Heaton Road and Heyscroft Road and Fairholme Road and so on were built by the Hartley's estate. I imagine that was the name of the builder? These houses in Cotton Lane I live in, these 8 houses in Cotton Lane were built in 1929. They were built by Sparks and Stevens [possibly "Stephens"].

Were they local to Withington?

I don't know, but this was all farmland and pasture and fields and so on, and these 8 houses were built first. 1 to 15 Cotton Lane. The Hartley estate was not built until 1930s – round about 1933. So the Arnfield Road house was a Hartley house and it

was rebuilt after the war, but you can see it's not quite the same style as the other houses – not a lot different but you can see it's not quite the same.

I'll have to go and have a look at that because it's not the kind of thing you observe unless it's pointed out to you.

You know how to get to the one in Parkville Road. You go down Cotton Lane and continue down Cotton Lane and the second road on the right is Henwood Road. All terraced houses, and if you go down to the bottom of Henwood Road - it used to be called Henry Street, it was renamed by the Council in the 1950s. There's a passage at the end leading on to Parkville Road. The house which was bombed is on the left of the passage. So, if you continue onto Parkville Road and have a look at it you can see it's not quite the same style as the other semis in Parkville Road.

Those are my memories really of the war, being carried downstairs during the night by my mother and father put it in the air raid shelter, which was deep in our garden where the garage is now.

So you're still living in the same house?

I've lived in the same house all my life.

As you say, you've seen a lot of changes

Cotton Lane. It's completely changed. How has it changed? Well, where Cotton Lane joins Wilmslow Road, if you're facing down Cotton Lane from Wilmslow Road on the left there was a big mansion called The Grange. Today it's a school, a Muslim school. When I was still a boy it had stone gateposts with the letters ASW inscribed in the gateposts. The Grange was occupied by the Associated Society of Woodworkers. It must have been a small trade union and they occupied The Grange. It had trees all the way round and trees in the grounds and it was a lovely place.

What sort of trees did they have? Were they the sort of trees woodworkers would use or were they.....?

Nice big trees. There are trees there now but unfortunately the Muslim school were allowed to take down two trees with preservation orders on them in order to create a car park. So they destroyed the trees by The Grange in order to allow the Muslim school to build a car park.

Before the Muslim School bought it the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers left The Grange, the mansion, and it was taken over by the City Council and converted to an old people's home.

Can you remember the date it changed from being Woodworkers to being the home?

I don't know when – it would be 1960s/1970s. It was fine as an old people's home because all the trees were preserved and so on. They also built a couple of houses/bungalows in the grounds which were numbered 1a and 1b Cotton Lane and some small bungalows down the side as well. Eventually the Manchester City Council decided they were going to sell this old people's home, which was a pity because it had a nice use here, and it was put up for sale and eventually sold to the Muslim

school. Unfortunately they have done some environmental damage. They made a gap in the wall in order to create an exit to their new car park and recently they've been allowed to demolish an absolutely beautiful tree in the grounds. So they've done some environmental damage unfortunately. The Grange extended a little way down Cotton Lane, you can follow the wall round and there the pavement ended. On one side there was no pavement down Cotton Lane. On the left hand side going down Cotton Lane, until you got to number 1 Cotton Lane, there was no pavement. The grounds which are now occupied by 1c to 1j Cotton Lane and Chatterton Close—that was a new estate built on the grounds of what was called Jersey House, which was another mansion. The grounds extended to where the pavement is now. There were trees where the pavement is now, all big trees. So Cotton Lane was lined with trees on both sides of the road. If you were walking down Cotton Lane from Wilmslow Road, when it got to the beginning of Jersey House, you had no pavement on this side of the road, you had to walk on the road.

What did they have for a pavement?

There was a sort of fence where the pavement is now. There was a pavement as far as the Grange and now there's a passage leading to Harcombe Road that was filled in at one time, and the entrance to Jersey House was there. So this was a very big mansion which was later converted into flats. I don't know of what use it was originally. As I say, the interesting part was there was no pavement from The Grange down to number 1 Cotton Lane and you had to walk in the road. Of course there wasn't so much traffic in those days. It would be rather a surprise these days that all the children going to St Cuthbert's school, had to walk on the road. They could cross over the road and walk on the pavement on the other side by the wall, but no-one ever did that. We all walked on the road.

Why didn't people like to cross?

Well, some did, but most people just walked ... there just wasn't the traffic there is today. The children walking to school walked on the road until they got to number 1 Cotton Lane, where the pavement started again.

So that's Jersey House, a very big mansion surrounded by trees and grounds. A lovely area, and converted into flats. I remember it was converted into flats because when I was a student, a University student, I did Christmas post one or two years and on one or two occasions I had to deliver the post to Jersey House. The cards and letters and so on, were addressed to different people at Jersey House.

Did you have to sort out quite a lot of them because they hadn't got quite the right number?

[Laughs] I can't remember, but I remember visiting Jersey House in the past. I don't know when exactly in the 1980s Jersey House was sold and the developer got it. Oh, and before we come to that, I said there was no pavement down Cotton Lane from The Grange as far as number 1. People were concerned about this so the Council agreed to make a pavement behind the trees. So, the trees stayed where they were and they made this sort of passageway behind the trees – slightly uphill. Some people couldn't be bothered going up the hill and used still go along the road.

So it was quite a narrow little path was it?

Yes, it was a pathway from where number 1 is now, behind the trees so the trees were preserved. Unfortunately, when Jersey House was sold, I don't know who to - the developer. You know what it's like now – a little housing estate now. You've got 1c -1j Cotton Lane. Chatterton Close with the houses there. Jersey House was demolished, all the trees which were preserved down Cotton Lane were all sawn down. Those were mature trees. All these wonderful trees were sawn down. The pavement was then extended from number 1 Cotton Lane to the Grange. Now, you wouldn't know today trees have been there, it's just an ordinary pavement. You've got the houses, the new houses on the right.

I described what was Jersey House. A tree-lined road. No pavement, the grounds extending to what would be the pavement now and later on a pathway built behind the trees connecting 1 Cotton Lane to The Grange area. When you get to these 8 houses (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15) built in 1929 they haven't been altered very much. Really, they're still as they were. Opposite my house 11, Cotton Lane, in the wall, there was a wooden door which was an entrance into the grounds opposite. That was bricked up later on as children used to push the door open and go and play in the grounds opposite. They used to climb and walk on the wall quite a lot too.

When you can continue down Cotton Lane - it forks on the left off Heyscroft Road - on the right continues as Cotton Lane. Just after the fork in the wall used to be a house built in the wall. There was a sort of house there, in the wall. I don't know who lived there. The windows were sort of in the wall - it's hard to describe it. Built by the wall and it was numbered 1A Cotton Lane, 1A Cotton Lane, but that completely disappeared many, many years ago, of course. Hardly anybody knows there was a house there called 1A.

Was it part of the estate? Was it lived in by someone who worked on the estate?

It might have been a sort of lodge I think. That was either Cotton House opposite – another big mansion Cotton House, Withington Hall. I'm not quite sure which it is. Both names are there, Cotton House and Withington Hall. I'm not quite sure about that. According to the 1845/8 tithe map, it's Cotton House. The wall continued and you arrived at the Cotton Tree Inn, which of course has been demolished now and replaced by terraced houses. The Cotton Tree Inn was there for many years. The local pub.

The Cotton Tree pub, that was on the corner by Cotton Hill. You go down Cotton Hill, you've got the terraced houses on the right, at least two of which were demolished at the end to extend the car park for the Cotton Tree Inn. They hadn't really got a car park and they were given permission to demolish two of the terraced houses at the beginning of Cotton Hill in order to build the car park. Car parks seem to dominate this area at the moment. King of the area - car parks! Anything will go for car parks, this is quite a long time ago of course, it's not recent. Two of the houses were demolished and the car park built for the Cotton Tree Inn. The Cotton Tree Inn no longer exists. It was demolished a number of years ago. Quite nice terraced houses were built there in place of the Cotton Tree Inn. If you go down Cotton Hill, and you've got the terraced houses on the right at the bottom there's an extension to Cotton Hill with some more modern houses which were built in the 1960s, I think. 1950s or 1960s. On the left hand side there is a

block of flats. These originally were where people had gardens and grew vegetables. They were allotments.

..interesting

During the war – I've got a picture there. This is Cotton Hill, me cycling down there. They built air raid shelters. Communal air raid shelters were built down Cotton Hill where the flats are at the moment, during the war.

So there were allotments behind that wall?

That's where the allotments were, where the houses are, that's the top of Cotton Lane. With St Cuthbert's School and this would be about 1940-41, I had a tricycle – probably about 1941.

Is that you in the picture?

That's me! During the war, Cotton Hill housed the communal aid raid shelters. At one time down Cotton Lane – there are no shops down Cotton Lane today – there were an awful lot of shops at one time. On the other side you've got Cotton Hill and the Cotton Tree Inn on the near side, as you go across the road, you've got a group of terraced houses and about five shops there. The end terraced house was a grocer's shop called Evans'.

Had a shop with his name outside – Evans'. He called his shop 'the good egg and bacon shop'. It was a grocery shop – you could get all your groceries there. This was during rationing during and after the war. You had to register with which shop you wanted to get your rations from. You couldn't go to any shop for your butter and sugar and tea. You had to get them from same shop – and you were rationed. The first shop was Evans' the grocer's. Then there were two or three houses in the terrace, and then you came to, I can't remember the name, two or three, I think there were three shops in the terrace. The first one was number 10 Cotton Lane – I remember the number because my number is 11. 10 Cotton Lane was a hairdresser's called Anne's, Anne's the hairdressers.

That's quite a modest name compared with some of the fancy pants names you get these days!

In the middle, there was a wool shop, then on the left another shop called Yardley's which was another grocer's shop. You could register there during the time of rationing for your groceries from Yardley's and so you had a choice of Evans' on the corner or Yardley's in the middle.

Was there a sort of rivalry between the two?

I don't know. At the end of the terrace where Henwood Road starts now – it used to be called Henry Street, renamed from Henry Street to Henwood Road – was another shop. This was a sort of small grocer's shop called Williamson's which wasn't very well patronised and they didn't stock a lot of things. Mainly bread. It didn't seem to be a very high class place.

So, mainly bread, which presumably they didn't bake on the premises, they got it in from somewhere else?

No, not baked on the premises. A funny sort of shop, really. They didn't seem to have very much and you never saw anybody go in there. I don't know much about it, but it was a shop of sorts. Yardley's was a proper grocer's shop, and Evans was a proper grocer's shop. Both of those were all right. Williamson's, funny sort of place. Didn't seem to sell very much. I know they did have bread but I don't know what else.

You cross over Henwood Road, towards the end where Cotton Lane meets Francis Road on the right, continue down Kingsley Road, on the right there's a number of terraced houses on the right. Quite imposing looking terraced houses. If you turn down what is now called Francis Road there used to be a building on the right which was occupied by what was called the Withington Laundry. Withington had a laundry called the Withington Laundry. It was situated down what is now called Francis Road. I don't know if it was always called Francis Road, on the right. And the imposing looking terraced houses belonged to the Laundry and I believe they were bought for the people who worked at the Laundry.

That's interesting so, just called "The Withington Laundry"?

It was Withington Laundry, a big laundry. They had vans – Withington Laundry vans. If you wanted laundry doing, you'd take it to Withington Laundry. It was a big laundry.

So did the van collect from people?

Yes

So did they have the one van or several?

I don't know, I couldn't tell you about that.

I think I've seen it. Hasn't it still got a chimney remaining?

The building is still there. That road is interesting – Francis Road. At one time at the bottom of Francis Road was a big field, and that belonged to Withington Cricket Club, and the grounds, which are now an estate with houses, was originally, the grounds of the Withington Cricket Club. It was decided to develop the ground and to build a school there. The school in question was new premises for old Fallowfield Church of England High School for Girls. Of course, the old building was in Fallowfield and they decided to move to new premises and they were given permission to build a new school on the grounds of the Withington Cricket Club. At the time there was a great furore on this as you might imagine. People didn't want to lose the cricket ground. And there were protests and demonstrations and goodness knows what, but of course the cricket ground lost. And eventually they built this new school, for Fallowfield Church of England High School which now became not just single-sex, but it took boys as well. We used to see the girls in a brown uniform and the boys wore a green blazer. And you'd see them going down Cotton Lane to Francis Road to the new school. A lot of money was spent on that school, the parents gave a lot of money to build a music centre there. It became a very, very good school. Although it was originally it was called a Technical High School, it was more like a little Grammar School and of course this didn't suit Manchester City Council, who were all for comprehensive education. So they managed eventually to

persuade Fallowfield Technical High School and then another Church of England school, Bishop Greer School to amalgamate, and they offered them a new building in Moss Side which is the site of the present Trinity High School. And so this lovely new school was demolished after only a few years.

So where did the cricketers go?

I don't know. Now if you continue down, Cotton Lane, ends where Kingsley Road starts - the council estate. And just before the Council estate starts on the right hand side, there were one or two shops. The first shop was a very, very big shop. And it was a Co-op. At one time, Co-ops had all local names like the Manchester and Salford Equitable Co-operative Society, and the one at the top of Cotton Lane was the Beswick Co-operative Society. Why the Beswick? Well, my mother told me the reason for this. Kingsley Road of course is the council estate. My mother told me that the first people they moved in to the council estate, when there was slum clearance, were people from the Beswick area. The first occupants of Kingsley Road were the people from Beswick, which was a slum clearance area. And as the people of Beswick had been used to their area Co-op, Beswick, Beswick Co-op agreed to open a store there. Anyone could use it, but it was built specifically for people of the council estate who had been moved from Beswick. The building is still there – it's not a Co-op now, I'm not sure what it is. I don't think it is a shop at all now. It had been used after the Beswick Co-op disappeared by other shops. And there was also a fish and chip shop. As I say, the first shop was a chemist – Mr Cross. My father used to go to Mr Cross for cough tablets. He used to like cough tablets. He used to take me up Cotton Lane to Mr Cross' house, to Mr Cross' shop. Mr Cross it was who bought the bombed house in Parkville Drive. More shops of course, when you go down Henwood Road, half-way down where the terraced houses start, that was a shop as well. That was another grocer's shop. It's amazing how many shops there were. At the top of Cotton Lane where it joins Heathside Road on the left you had a butcher's shop and then a newsagents and Post Office. It was a sub-branch of the Post Office, then a grocer's shop and finally, a greengrocer's shop. There were four shops at the top of Cotton Lane on Heathside Road. A butcher's, a post-office that was very, very useful - sub post office that was closed down I don't know when. When they closed down all these sub post offices and you had to go all the way to Withington Post Office – no longer just up the road to your local sub post office. The grocer's shop, a very nice quality grocer's shop and a greengrocer's shop. You could do all your shopping in Withington in Cotton Lane without going to the village.

There seem to be little shops everywhere even round where I live you can see various places that used to be shops – shut down. Do you remember actually going to the shops yourself to run errands for your parents?

Yes, I did. My mother decided not to register with Yardley's. Number 3 Cotton Lane – the people called Maddocks – did register with Yardley's, and Mrs Maddocks during the war got all her local groceries from Yardley's, but my mother, for some reason, wasn't very keen on Yardley's. Don't ask me why, I don't know. We registered with a shop on Wilmslow Road – the line of shops on Wilmslow Road which is just past the clinic now. There were a whole lot of shops there. There was a shop originally called Hevicon's and we registered with them. They took it over from Adam's in 1946.

I think that's the row of shops that's now got Cartridge World. It's got a hairdressers and estate agents...

No - that's the other side of the road. It's the row of shops with the funeral director.

The right side of the road as you go towards Didsbury

This is on the left hand side. There was a row of shops. There was Hevicon's and a grocer's shop at the end which I think is now a betting shop but I'm not quite sure. There was a sweet shop next to Hevicon's called Scott's, an electrician's and a gift shop.

So were there ever any clothes shops? A lot of grocers and ...

Well, the clothes shops were in Withington village itself. There were two big clothes shops. There was Farnworth's which is occupied now by a small supermarket. That was Farnworth's - the drapers and clothing shop. You could go there for all your clothes and all drapery. And on the other side of the road there was a very good shop called Leather's. You could get all your clothing things from either Farnworth's or Leather's. There were half a dozen grocer's shops in Withington Village.

That many?

There was Seymour Meads; Handforths; the Maypole; John Williams; Kingdon's. There were at least five grocer's shops in Withington village and the Co-op (corner of Wilmslow Road and Edgerton Crescent).

Did they all sell pretty much the same thing or did they specialise?

Kingdon's specialised in bottled drinks – alcoholic – as well as groceries. The Maypole was more of a dairy shop. Withington had the honour of having the only branch of WH Smith's in Manchester. You know if you go into Manchester now and go in the Arndale there's a very big branch of WH Smith's. At one time WH Smith's, which had branches in practically every town in the country, had no branches in Manchester apart from stalls on railway stations. There was no WH Smith's in Manchester, apart from one which was in Withington. Warnock's then became the shop which closed down but used to sell diaries and art materials.

That's very strange. Do you know why?

WH Smith's sold it eventually to Warnock's and then to, what was the name of the other the place? Anyway, it was sold about five or six years ago by the other occupants. As I say, Withington had the honour of having the only branch of WH Smiths in Manchester. They also had a branch of Boots where the Well chemist's is. Where the Co-op chemists is at the moment – that was Boots.

So did you ever go to the cinema in Withington?

Well, it was called The Scala, The Scala of course. But some people used to call it the 'Skaler'. Now it not 'Skaler', it's Scala.

I think it's named after the Opera....or something

In Milan. The Scala opera house in Milan. It was the Scala which eventually changed its name to The Cine City. It's hard to say. Now it's just an empty area where no-one's built anything.

Did you actually go to the cinema yourself, when it was still ...?

Oh, yes The Scala. I used to go every Saturday night - with my parents.

What sort of things did they show there?

All the main films. They were always a bit later getting to Withington. When they finished showing in town at the Odeon and Gaumont in Manchester, they would be moved down to the suburbs. Pathé newsreels, and then the main picture. They used to have sittings at 6 o'clock and 8 o'clock. You could go to the first sitting at 6 o'clock or the second sitting at 8 o'clock.

Did people manage to stay over to see a film twice?

People used to go in before the first sitting had finished and so they saw the end of the film first. So when it came round to where they'd seen it, they said "I've seen this already". They'd get up and go out because they'd seen the end of the film anyway. It sounds incredible doesn't it? It did happen! The evening always finished with the National Anthem which people stood up for. The other cinema, was the Palatine Picture House.

Where was that? I've not heard of that one before.

It was at the junction of Lapwing Lane and Palatine Road which is now a JobCentre Plus.

Oh, right. So did some people tend to go one or the other or did they-

They showed different films – they didn't show the same films

Was there a niche market in one of the other? Was one more likely to show cowboy films and one was more likely to show something else?

Not particularly – you just decided you'd go to the Palatine Road or the Scala because you wanted to see a certain film they were advertised in the Manchester Evening News. We used to go to the Palatine Road sometimes – we had to walk to West Didsbury. It was in West Didsbury where Palatine Road meets Lapwing Lane. Where - what do you call them now?

Job Centre?

Yes, Job Centre.

I'd been past the building, but I had no idea ...

They demolished the cinema and built a Job Centre there.

Had it been quite a grand-looking building as a cinema?

More grand than The Scala, I think.

Did it have better seats?

I can't remember that. I wouldn't like to say.

Well, I suppose if the lights are out you can't actually see the décor

So that was the Palatine. So you either went to the Scala or the Palatine in West Didsbury. There was also the Odeon on the corner of Green End Road and Kingsway and a small cinema in Didsbury Village down one of the side the roads where the Post Office is/was.

Was there a garage or anywhere that sold cars? Or electrical shops or other ones or was it just mainly grocers' and drapers'?

Oh there was everything yes. There were decorating shops, where you could buy wallpaper and paints. Everything you could think of. There was a shoe repairer's called Baldwin's and two hardware shops called "The Ark" and Wilkinson's from Egerton Crescent to Wilmslow Road when Heald's closed down.

I was just thinking that with the rise of the motorcar there would have been garages popping up and things like that.

There was a service station. You know where Wilmslow Road branches at the Library? And then on the left at Wellington Road, there was a garage there at one time. There was a garage down Burton Road on the left one time. And another thing that people don't know, The Red Lion – on the corner of where the Red Lion is and Marriot Street, you've got the Red Lion and then Marriot Street – on that corner at the side of the Red Lion, they sold petrol. There were petrol pumps.

So the Red Lion itself was selling petrol?

I don't know if it was the Red Lion or what. During the war, of course, you couldn't buy petrol. People couldn't get petrol to drive, of course, there was a shortage of petrol. When the petrol pumps were there, I remember them very clearly as a boy. I remember seeing the one with a Shell design on.

Were the petrol pumps where you got a big arm that sort of swung out?

Well I don't know. During the war, they were not selling petrol during the war of course. So it was obviously before the war that they were selling petrol there but the petrol pumps were still in existence, when I was a boy.

And they didn't sell it after the war there?

No, they took them away - a relic of something before the war.

So where did you go to school? Was it round here?

In general, most children went to St Paul's (C of E) or St Cuthbert's (RC). Where did I go to school? Well, St Cuthbert's which was what was called an all-age school before sort of re-organisation according to the 1944 Education Act which brought in secondary education for all. At the age of 11, children took an examination. If they passed, they either went to Grammar/ High School or Didsbury Central School (now Barlow High School). If they failed, they remained at elementary schools in those

days, not primary schools. Elementary schools took pupils from 5 – 14 so if you passed the 11+, you went on to Burnage High School for boys or Levenshulme High School for girls. But if you failed your 11+, you stayed at your elementary school. St Cuthbert's which today is a primary school taking children from 5 – 11, when I was a boy took pupils from 5 – 14.

I went to Manchester Independent Grammar School. I passed the 11+ for Manchester Education Committee and also I passed the Manchester Grammar School examination. So Manchester Education Committee were much more liberal in those days – I don't mean Liberal with a capital L. If you passed your 11+ for Manchester - I could have gone to Burnage Grammar School, I passed for that – but I also passed for Manchester Grammar School, the Council would pay your fees for Manchester Grammar School. So my fees were paid by Manchester Education Committee to go to Manchester Grammar School.

Would you have had your fees paid, had you decided to go to the Burnage Grammar School?

Burnage Grammar School was a Corporation school – in those days they didn't call them Council schools, they were Corporation. Burnage, Levenshulme, Whalley Range, Central High School for Girls, Central High School for Boys, Chorlton High School, North Manchester High School for Boys, North Manchester High School for Girls - they were all run by the Manchester Education Committee. Manchester Grammar School was a sort of independent school. What was called after 1944, direct grant. You got the money direct from the Government.

So it was considered a better school?

Oh, Manchester Grammar School. Yes, it was supposed to be one of the best schools in the country – not that I remember it as so being there, but it had a reputation.

School days being the happiest days of your life. A lot of people will agree it is not so. Adults think they are wonderful but I don't think they've been there.

That's another story for another time. I won't go into Manchester Grammar School! I went to Manchester Grammar School. I had a school uniform which was a dark navy blazer with the owl's crest on the pocket and a cap. We had to wear a school cap. I had to get the bus to Manchester Grammar School. I had to go down Cotton Lane in the morning to Wilmslow Road to catch the bus for Old Hall Lane. Unfortunately, the boys who had failed the 11+ were coming down Cotton Lane the other way to St. Cuthbert's. I used to get jeered and shouted at.

Was it just the normal Corporation bus that everybody uses?

It was the ordinary bus service.

What number was it called?

The number 1. Gatley to Piccadilly was the number 1 bus service. It later became the 161 and the 162 when they opened the Kingsway extension.

The extension from where?

Well, at one time, if you were going south from Manchester, you got to East Didsbury, you could only continue down Kingsway as far as the River Mersey. The road ended at the River Mersey. So, if you wanted to go south, you had to go through Cheadle and to School's Hill all the long way round to get over the river to continue south.

It sounds a bit like where the 130 bus goes now.

You had to go to Cheadle and round School's Hill. There was no real direct route right down Kingsway. Kingsway ended where the river ended. This was absolutely terrible, of course. Caused terrible traffic increase so they eventually connected up Kingsway with the other side over the River Mersey. And they called that Kingsway extension. When they built the Kingsway extension, they decided to renumber the number 1 bus service, the one from Gatley to Piccadilly was renumbered the number 161 or 162. The number 161 followed the route of the old number 1 through Cheadle, and the 162 went down Kingsway extension. If you're going to Gatley you just go down Kingsway don't you? You couldn't do that before the extension so the bus had to go to Cheadle, round Cheadle, and Gatley that way. So the 161 was the traditional route through Cheadle and the 162 the new route went down the Kingsway extension. That's how we lost the prestigious number 1. It became the 161 and 162. Later, in the 1960s they decided to number all the buses down the Wilmslow Road in the forties. The 161, the 162 had disappeared by then and there was only the 161 left, and they renumbered it the number 45. And then that went west as well and the 42 was diverted down Wilmslow Road. I could spend an hour telling you about bus routes.

Was there any company in Withington itself that ran a bus company?

No, the nearest was Fingland's in Fallowfield. Actually in the 1980s to 1990s they ran buses in competition with Selnec [South East Lancashire and North East Cheshire] and so on. They were bought out by First Buses then about two years ago First Bus – run the number 42s now - and they were the buses that Fingland's used to run. Fingland's sold out to First Buses.

I think some Fingland's buses are still going.

They've still got coaches. Or did they sell out to Bullock's - I'm not quite sure. They were running bus services down Wilmslow Road until about two to three years ago.

When I moved to Manchester there seemed to be five companies – you've got the UKNorth bus; there's Magic; Fingland's, Bullock's, Stagecoach

There's Walls who went bankrupt. Same as the ice cream people. I'm not saying it's the same company, same people. Same name - they had green buses.