

Memories of Lady Bay

Contributed by Douglas Cheetham b 1932, lived in Lady Bay 1939-1950

We moved to West Bridgford in 1939/40 from Radford. Firstly to 84 Julian Rd and not long after to 164 Holme Rd, as a family of three boys and two girls plus my mother's youngest brother who lived with us: Dad Richard & Mum Annie, Allan, Betty, Ronald, Douglas (me) and baby Ann plus my mum's younger brother Sonny, who was my uncle and was brought up as a brother and was a miner at Clifton Colliery.

My father, as far as I know, was the only chimney sweep in Bridgford and was always in great demand. The quality of the coal we received in those days during the war was not always great, so sooty chimneys were a problem...

When we moved to 164 Holme Road there was a nine-tree orchard, stables, workshop and garage; three beds and box room and a big walk-in larder. My father would never allow us to go onto the balcony as he said it was unsafe. It used to view over the fields before the houses opposite were built and had two big bay window rooms, a kitchen and a nice living room, plus a built-on lean-to greenhouse: we loved it!

I lived in Holme Road until 1950 when I left to do my National Service and subsequently came to live in Skipton, North Yorkshire.

Douglas 13 years old in 1945: Wartime Memories

As a boy, **a tale about the Trent fields**. During the war one night, a string of bombs fell across the fields. They made the usual screaming sound as they came down but no explosions as they landed. We were advised to stay away as these were unexploded time bombs and sure enough around about midday the following day they went off. We went off to collect shrapnel - the nearest one to us was on the river side of Pinders pond. I bet there is still a hole where that landed, it was a big bomb!

Another boyhood memory was **the sound of Colwick Weir**. When I lived in Holme Rd, if the river was carrying a lot of water, the roar of the torrent going over the weir was a lovely sound as you laid in bed. The river at that time seemed to be more important as we didn't have so many material things, so a lot of our pleasure came from playing there. It was a proper meandering river with sandy beaches and then, after the war and flood relief, it was dredged into a large dyke. At least I did see it and the sight of Tom Blower, our channel swimmer, ploughing through it on training runs with his special stroke - I think they called it the "Trunghan" stroke; happy days!

Editor's note – Douglas may be referring to the "Trudgen" stroke – ref <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trudgen>.

In the 40s someone decided to mount a **Naval Gun** at the bottom of Holme Road, just before Pinders Pond and a little army unit was set up to facilitate this. The sergeant in charge explained to our local gang of wide-eyed youngsters that, although it fired a massive shell, it was not its prime use to shoot down enemy planes. It was merely a bit of a moral booster for the locals to show the Germans that we were fighting back. A lot of the bombs dropped on Nottingham were the result of the practice of ditching bombs on the way back to Germany from aircraft that had been raiding Coventry (a much more heavily attacked city than ours) and for some reason prevented from doing so. The first time it fired, it was an almighty bang, resulting in broken and cracked windows in the local area. The local Air raid warden came round after with rolls of sticky tape to be used on your windows to stop this - a bit late I think.

During the war, as young boys, one of our greatest pleasures was helping with "**Salvage Drives**"; sometimes paper sometimes metal. Aluminium was in great demand to build Spitfires. My brother and I were sent with our barrow round Lady Bay, picking up this scrap from outside houses to take to one central point for final collection. Any metal was deemed fit for this purpose and I must say a lot of metal toys were donated and the thought of such treasures being scrapped was too much for our young minds to accept and some did not make it to the collection point! We never thought that there might be a spitfire flying around with one wing...

It's strange to think now of our desire to get our air around the planet cleaner when during the war just the opposite was true. Many of the roads around Lady Bay were set out at intervals on the pavement edge with a metal drum with a chimney on top. These drums were filled with old oil and loads of old rags. After tea a warden would arrive and ignite them but close the air intake, so that there was no flame, just thick oily smoke. As you walked along in the blackout it was like a scene from Dante's inferno; there were dozens of these all belching out and the effect was to produce a **smokescreen over the whole area** to hide us from the German Bombers. The smell was quite bad as well.

One of the most subtle changes to most areas that happened just after the outbreak of war was **the removal of Victorian railings**. These decorative items adorned a lot of walls in Lady Bay, giving the whole area a sense of 'Victoriana'. I don't know who decided to take them for scrap to help the war effort but go they did, with a few exceptions. They were cut off by acetylene torch, some quite neatly and some left with jagged edges on top of the wall. Initially, the method for fixing railings was to drill a hole, insert the rail and fill with lead. The remains will still be seen on the top stones. At the time it really did change the visual appearance of Lady Bay.

Air raid shelters in Lady Bay. I remember about four different types: the *Anderson*, made of corrugated metal and buried half way into the ground, the best I thought. The *Table*; this was a heavy metal table top and heavy bottom with metal supports and wire supports around the sides and mostly situated in your kitchen. A newly *brick-built* one; these were square with concrete roof and, being new, very strong.

Finally the *communal* shelters which were larger concrete Nissan shaped with side brick walls and soil-packed, with a blast wall half way down the inside.

Ibuprofen: When one turned off Trent Boulevard down Belvoir Rd behind the school, there used to be a building owned by Boots. My sister worked there and it housed a facility for the study of rats in some sort of experiments [Ibuprofen was invented here]. She brought home one of these rats home as a pet and he lived in a cage on the shelf in our kitchen. It was very tame and clean, an ideal pet. But, as most of these rodents do, he was prone to finding paper and tearing it up for nest material. I'm afraid this one made the grave mistake of picking up a ten shilling note belonging to my father and gave it the treatment. All I know is that he disappeared and whether he ever made it back to Boots I will never know..."

Collated and edited by Brenda Baxter and Steve Charters, from facebook posts and personal messages, adapted with Douglas Cheetham's permission