

Memories of Wednesfield by Ray Fellows (published in the Wednesfield Magazine, 2020)

A virtual walk from Tithe Road to Gregory's Bridge, the date is set from the 1950s onwards.

From the bottom of Tithe Road, we take a look at the shops across the road. The first one we note is what used to be a paper shop – the name may have been Nicholls. The next shop was Millards grocery. Then we had George Griffiths and his wife Audrey who ran the fancy dress shop and also sold school uniforms.

Around the corner we had Robinson's greengrocery shop, later to become a betting shop run by Norman Round. Norman was a nice bloke who later had a newspaper shop on the Willenhall to Wolverhampton Road.

Back across the road we continue our walk until we get to a green gate just past the six houses on the right. This was the entrance to what we kids in the 60s used to call King Georges field – as schoolkids we used the field to play Rugby and Football; there was a Rugby pitch and posts. When at March End Secondary School in 1962, the school also used the field for Rugby whilst the grass grew and settled on the March End and Grammer school fields. To the left of the green gate there used to be about half a dozen fence panels made up of white gravel boards. This fence ran up to the first shop, which 'was Sambrooks the butchers. Sambrooks had a house in Amos Lane just behind the allotments that were in North Avenue. Sambrook's shop in the late 60s became a Fish & Chip shop and there were pinball machines that the young lads used to play on.

Next door to the shop was Frankie Griffiths' grocery shop. Frankie sold Faggots; you would take a jug and he would fill it with faggots and gravy and apparently, they were very popular with customers. Frankie kept pigeons in the back garden and he had a lovely apple tree. Those two shops still stand today and they are now known as Papa Johns and Spice River. To the left of Frankie Griffiths' shop were the back gardens of the terraced house that ran alongside the main road, so the two shops were in like a fold. The terraced houses (of which there were about half a dozen) ran along the main road until the car park of the Cross Guns pub. One of the terraced houses was a Fish & Chip shop - the name escapes me. When those old terraced houses were demolished six shops were built at the back so that the eight shops run in line.

The Cross Guns used to stand on the very front of the main road but it was rebuilt at the rear of the old one in the 1930s. Arthur Hadley was licensee in the late 50s early 60s. There is an alley down the side of the pub that leads to the park but it has been fenced off for some time. After the Cross Guns the terraced houses continued on the front of the road until Taylor Street. In 1960 these terraced houses were demolished and a new building started to appear behind the rubble, the Springhill Drapers store took shape, and suddenly, or so it seemed, there it was one sunny day, open for business with an





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opening day give-away of a 10shilling note for the first dozen customers. I remember standing in the queue from 5.00.am, until they opened in the spring of 1961. The store was later split up into different little shops and work places where Jason from Elegant Frames has had his shop/workplace for 30 years. At one time, one of the shops was called the Penguin freezer centre.

We continue our walk into Taylor Street and halfway up on the right was Tommy Grosvenor's coal yard and just past that there was a shop that sold sweets and other items. Further up on the left we had Williams' Trap works at number 43. This was Wednesfield's last remaining Trap makers. Back down Taylor Street around halfway on the right there was a dirt track that took you to Duke Street and it is still there today.

Down to the main road on the corner we had a shop that sold sweets, I think the name of the shop was Hubble's. As school kids going to the school across the road it was a must to go into the sweet shop. After Hubble's shop we had the Vine and like the Cross Guns the Vine used to be on the front of the main road up until 1939 when the present Vine was built. Mrs Florence Lathe was licensee from 1957 till 1992. The pub was known locally as the 'Young and Old'. In the late 1960s we would have a drink in the Vine, back then it seemed a very old-fashioned pub but now it is a really good modern-day pub that retains some of its old worldly charm. Next to the Vine on the main road stood a large house that had been turned into a factory, this was Hill's Fibreglass that stood on the corner of Duke Street. It made fish ponds, canoes and fireplaces. Ray Smith of Wood Avenue worked there when he was 15.

Duke street was more of a dirt track in the late 1950s and about 50 yards up on the left, just inside the field, were two stables. Up the dirt track at the top on the left was the allotment's which ran alongside the flower park, or as some used to call it, the old park. Coming back down the track you could cut across the field and climb over a gate that was by Gregory's Bridge.

In the field close to the canal stood a cottage and the people who lived there from 1947 to 1953 were Mr and Mrs Lloyd - the address for the cottage was 5 the Fields, Lichfield Road. Mr and Mrs Lloyd later moved to Moat Green Avenue. The rent for the cottage was 7/6d. The estate that is on that land today was built in the late 1950s.

Back down Duke Street to the main road and across the road was the Drill Hall and just past that was Squires house, The Hills, built in 1914. We are now standing on Gregory's Bridge looking at the village so for now our journey has ended.