

John and Elsie Adamson

John has lived in Queen's Park for over seventy-five years, moving house just three times. His wife Elsie is a relative newcomer - having grown up in Black Tom, she moved to Queen's Park sixty-seven years ago. Elsie spent eighteen years working in the office at Westfield School and they now live opposite Allen Park.



Fred and Bill Ambidge had a butcher's shop next door to Consumers in Idlesleigh Road. They got their meat from their big slaughterhouse in Hurst Grove, where Stanley's car repair garage is now. They were ever so busy there, especially on Saturdays with the cattle market in town. Half a dozen old boys (aged about 12) helped to drive twenty cows from the cattle market in Commercial Road, down Prebend Street and over the railway bridge. It was a work of art to stop cattle bolting down Midland Road or towards the station instead of over the bridge to Queen's Park. I was one of the old boys who did this job and we got about a tanner (2½p) or a shilling (5p) if you were lucky.



BLAS Z50/142/325

Dad would never get his hands dirty, so I used to collect two buckets of blood every week to carry home up to 118 Hurst Grove (corner of Preston Road). We'd dilute it down and it made excellent food for growing tomatoes in the back yard. We had four or five dozen tomato plants at home and even had tomatoes at Christmas. We bottled some of the tomatoes so that you could use them for cooking.

Simons had a bakehouse at the back of Brinklow's bakery on the corner of Cromwell Road and Ford End Road. My job after school was to knock the dough up in the big old wooden troughs in the bakehouse. They sold nearly all bread, some cakes and currant buns - nothing fancy. I sometimes helped with the deliveries, but the saddle on the bike was always too high.



During the war, a regular thing that mum made were banana sandwiches. She'd get a load of parsnips, skin them, chop them into small pieces and boil them up to a pulp. Mum then mashed them up and added a few drops of banana essence to make 'banana spread' to put on our bread and marge.

There was no ice cream during the war, so we had things like rhubarb and custard (the rhubarb was sweetened with treacle or syrup if you didn't have any sugar). The custard was made with a third milk and two-thirds water, so it was more yellow water than custard! Sometimes it would be made with powdered milk.

*Arrival of first bananas after war
BLAS Z50/142/799
Beds Times collection*

After we were married, we lived next door to Tilley's sweet factory in Gratton Road. They had a glucose-holding tank that flowed into a four-inch pipe running down the passage. There'd be glucose dripping from the pipe and you'd get kids standing under it with their mouths open to drink the liquid. You got used to the smell and could tell what they were making each day, especially pear drops; if you smelt peppermint you knew they were making rock that day.



They would make vanloads of rock with Yarmouth written through it or other seaside places down the east coast. People went to Yarmouth for their holidays or for a day trip and would buy sticks of rock and bring them back to Bedford!

We never threw sour milk away... we'd leave it for a few days then strain it through a bit of muslin. You'd squeeze the juice through and keep whipping the clotted milk up until you were left with gunge. It was a very labour intensive job and from a quart of milk, you'd get just a cupful of 'sour milk cheese', a bit like cottage cheese. We'd add a little bit of salt and pepper to taste and it was lovely on bread and marge or between two or three lettuce leaves. The muslin was what the mutton came in, but we boiled it clean first!