

# The 1<sup>st</sup> Pinball!

Sileby 1940-1955

As seen by Geoff Rose

## Introduction

Geoffrey Michael Rose, born 6<sup>th</sup> May 1940 at 25 Danvers Road, Mountsorrel. Lived at 8 Hobbswick (over little concrete bridge) with parents Edwin and Connie Rose. Two facts were kept quiet in my early years. Least important was my middle name – it caused hilarity in classes (one of life's burdens). The other would have taken torture to extract from me! Grandma lived in Mountsorrel and in those days, daughters went home to Mam to have their babies. So I was born in Grans' middle bedroom and would have been labelled a 'foreigner'. It even applied when visiting distant parts of the village.

Our lot living in the 'Mecca' (Dudley's bridge to the recky) were often invaded – "Hey up! look out! foreigners" was shouted (did it start in the middle ages?).

Suppose I was lucky being an only child as I had to go out and play and soon got good at holing in with other gangs, making them laugh was my key. I made friends on Cemetery Road, Greedon Rise, Albion Road and Ratcliffe Road. Was always in the last couple when sides for game were picked. Looking back, Seagrave, Barrow and Cossington Road kids were in the same boat in that they were out on a limb and so couldn't join in the same.

## Mam & Dad

When I was about 3 years old, I was pageboy to Mr & Mrs Pearson. Dressed in white satin suit (not happy with photos!). My first memory is waking suddenly to a loud noise and the house shaking. I staggered onto the landing and Mam ran up and carried me downstairs and sat in front of the fire, cuddled me and read a story (much later, I found out it was a bomber raid heading for Germany).

Spent lots of time with Mam. She had a Hurdy Gurdy (linking machine) in the kitchen and I used to help by cutting off and turning socks. Dad made a lovely polished pole for this job.

Mam loved to sing songs such as "Red sails in the sunset" and others by Gracie Fields and Bing Crosby. When I was in the doghouse, "you are my sunshine, my only sunshine – you make me happy when skies are grey" (in a haughty voice). Also, she used to yodel "while shepherds watch their flocks by night".

When you start to think of the early years, holidays, Christmas and Birthdays come to mind but most things are taken for granted (in fact, you don't even think about them at the time). There was always food, clean clothes, made bed, nice garden & lawn and sympathy when ill.

They bought me a 3-wheel bike when I was about five and a 2 wheeler at twelve. I'm afraid I moaned about this because it was too ordinary for me (I wanted a racer). However, it turned out to be a real workhorse for scrambling, paper delivering and I even used it for work later on.

Being an only one, I could get away with murder and was spoilt rotten. Nothing in the following pages could have been achieved without their help and support. Thanks Mam & Dad.

## Grandparents

My Grandparents lived on Danvers Road in Mountsorrel. We made weekly trips either walking across the fields or catching Howletts bus Sunday nights with Mam. I sometimes had a bit of trouble with the local kids, but not too bad as Mam knew everybody in the street, mothers included. Grandpa had a big wooden chair (I daren't sit on it) and a wireless with only one knob that went up, down, left, right and turned for different functions. I was fascinated by it for years and eventually got to dismantle it. He had a shed where family and friends shoes were mended with my help.

Interesting loo: This was a wooden shelf that was about knee high with a large hole; underneath was a 2ft wide galvanised tub. There was a nail in the right hand wall, attached to which was a bit of string with small squares of newspaper attached (made frustrating reading); I'll leave the rest to your imagination.

Gramps had three allotments and at various times I helped gather food and Dahlias. I used to sleep at their house for a week most summers, which gave me the chance to explore every inch of Mountsorrel. On the hills, I remember a big scar that came down the steepest slope, it was a pig to climb with its loose or wet clay and sliding down was compulsory. I also went cliff climbing around the quarries and discovered 'sorrel common - what a place! - with undulating and twisting tracks that were great on your bike. The only downside was Gorse bushes. I must have 'wasted' many days there.

Naughty boy: One day, I had a bit of aggro; the local lads were riding their bikes at me, one in particular. I side stepped him and grabbed his handle bar as he went past - I got an earful from his Mam.

## Aunties

In those days, every woman more than ten years older than yourself was called Auntie - related or not. My Dad had two sisters (Lucky Me!); Aunt Violet owned a shop in Bristol. We visited several times with Uncle Ambrose, and I went to my first football match - Bristol versus Leicester City. Also, we went around the docks and the University where Cousin Ray dipped a tomato in Liquid Nitrogen and then shattered it like glass. We also went on walks around the bombed churches and other buildings. I helped in the back of the shop where there were several 3ft square wooden containers full of flour, sugar, oats etc. - in those days, the shop keeper had to weigh and bag their own stock - it was great fun.

Aunt Ivy and Uncle George Collington lived in a big house on the High Street that stood where the Co-op is now. I would call every Saturday morning and run errands to Mrs Busby, Mrs Russell, the Post Office etc. Most of the time though we would be eating cake and talking with the various dignitaries that dropped in (MC, VW, Mrs G and Mrs B). When it was time to say cheerio, they would always slip me half a crown for my trouble - lucky me! They had a fantastic house and had regular parties starting with high tea where grown ups sat talking whilst I would be in my favourite spot under the oak sideboard or playing with a large tin of coins that they had (reputed to come from the pub takings of a distant ancestor - wish I had that now!) Later, when the big round table was clear, the cards would come out. Mam, Dad, Auntie Ivy and Uncle George would always be there; often Mr & Mrs Goss or Mrs Burrows would also join in.

Uncle George had a fantastic state-of-the-art wireless with fancy lights and a mechanism that moved the pointer along the scale like magic. The pantry was bigger than our front room. I was allowed the run of the house apart from the front room (don't know why - what was in the front room?)

Upstairs was the office, full of drawers, shelves etc. One day, I found a stack of sticky paper flags and some miniature boats that I must have thought would be useful for swaps, so I bunged a load in my pockets. Later, Dad took me up to Uncle George - I'd been found out and had to put them back; I didn't receive any punishment, but was severely embarrassed and told not to do it again - I didn't.

The front garden was raised like a balcony and on parade days we sat and watched the world go by. Uncle George had a 6ft high shield fixed up and put flags and bunting all over it. I have a vague memory of the High Street being packed with people and floats (maybe it was VE day).

You think the house was interesting! - the garden covered the whole area of what is now the Co-Op car park and the Youth club was the Plumbers yard; a great play place. Some of the fruit trees still exist along the top wall, but in my day there were Victoria plums, Cox's Orange, pears, damsons and Loganberries. When I was very young, Gramps was the gardener; Dad took over later. I often went to hinder them and scrounge around. One of my mates fell out of an apple tree and landed on a pile of chimney pots - ouch!

Sand, bricks, piles of wood and water tanks are just a few of the playthings that were in Plumbers yard. When about five, I was playing in the works van and the handbrake slipped; I carefully steered it into Mrs Busby's wall. Poor old Dad rebuilt it; the scar can still be seen.

Uncle George had a car, the only one in our circle; I think it was a Vauxhall Cresta. I remember it being red with lots of chrome. We went on occasional picnics and sometimes to Bristol. There phone number was Sibley 238.

My Mam had one sister (Win) and one brother (Wilf).

Auntie Win and Uncle Ernie lived in Hathern. Chance for more trips to visit Cousins Janet and Joan but had to play with girl's toys. They had a nice play garden. When Uncle Ern died, Auntie Win moved to Loughborough. Days visiting with Mam and sometimes alone on my bike. I remember coming home once in the rain, very miserable with a dirty wet streak from neck to bum – the mudguard was useless!

Aunt Win was into music Nat King Cole, Crew-cuts etc. We had many interesting chats.

Uncle Wilf, Aunt Lillie and Margaret. Wilf was the funniest man, very deadpan; he would say things that would have us all laughing. Part of the fun was watching Aunt Lillie throwing daggers with her eyes. Sunday nights in the summer we would walk around the Humbles (between the top of Ratcliffe Road and Cossington) and call in Cossington pub where we had Vimto in the garden.

## Surrogate Aunties

Auntie Joan and Uncles Rupert and John owned a farm at Seagrave; we visited often. They had a duck pond and all sorts of animals. Running around one day I was sent to look in a big galvanised bath; they all laughed as I jumped back at the sight of a pig's head looking at me through pink water. Ady pulled the innards between finger and thumb until the contents were sprayed over the yard.

We were kept well supplied with eggs, hens and rabbits. Once, I went up on my bike for a couple of chickens and Rupert put them in a bag on my handlebars. On the way home, they were still kicking and fetched me off in a heap. Life's cruel, you don't remember the lovely days playing in fields – hay making/baling, muck spreading etc. Rupert taught me how to drive a tractor in the field on the right at the very top of Seagrave Road.

Auntie Joan had a wind-up gramophone and a big stack of records. I played with it so much that she took pity on me and gave it to me as a present. This started my ongoing love of music (my favourite record then went "Val da ree, Val da rah, I love to go a wandering along the mountain track" which was sung much later on Swiss holidays)

A regret: I used to help harvest and once, when we were bailing straw, John and I spotted a Sparrowhawk nest. In the dinner hour we climbed up, captured one of the babies and took it home where we kept it in a spare rabbit hutch. We tried to train it many times with an old leather glove but it was too vicious (I know now that I should have made a hood). It died after a couple of months and was my first experience of grief.

Another of my favourite places was Aunty Mables on the Banks. This was a meeting house with seats all around for people to drop in as they pleased; everybody was welcome and I often listened to them chopsin (gossiping) and putting the world to rights.

Aunt Edna was our next-door neighbour when I was small. Aunties Clara and Ethel on Albion Road looked after me when Mam was out at work. One day, Ethel had to go out and she locked me in the living room – after a while, I really needed to go and finished up peeing on the fire (resourceful me!). Playing there got me in with the trolley gang; small pram wheels, planks of wood and rope for steering. The trick was to start as high as you dare on Albion Road, turn the corner and coast towards the brook, or shoot straight across down The Fountain pub yard (traffic? – what was that!)

At the top of the road were the brickworks. You could watch the men making clay bricks with a wooden frame into which they would throw clay before levelling off the top with a wire saw. Near the railway was a large dome shaped structure where the bricks were baked. On the left of the road was a large pit that was hard to see into. The best spot was a painted wall with spikes along the top. You had to jump up, grab the top and then pull yourself up to see the cranes and diggers. The last time I tried it, my finger got hooked on a spike (still got the scar).

Beyond the brickyard stood a large house where DC lived. In the back garden was a deep well that I found fascinating; we lifted the lid and dropped bricks in many times.

## Home

Stayed in on rainy days and it was a great place for food. For breakfast we had Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, Cornflakes or Quaker Oats. 6" square Yorkshire that was good for cutting canals and islands into and then letting the 'sea' (gravy) run in. Soldiers with eggs and real toast done over the fire with a toasting fork that extended to 3ft. I wasn't keen on cod liver oil, syrup of figs or Scots emulsion.

When near deaths door, it was nice to lie in bed and be served with jugs of lemon water, rice pudding etc. I had a  $\frac{3}{4}$  bed with a feather mattress; when I was well tucked in, the feathers made a boat shape – snug as a bug in a rug. Radio Luxembourg played the top 10 Sunday nights at 12 o'clock. I rigged up a wireless with an earphone under my pillow – Dad would play hell in the morning if I dropped off and left it on.

My first den was under the living room table. My second was under the stairs with an outside door; Dad cleared the junk out and helped me make a workbench and put up an electric light. I had a stool and visitors had to sit on a box. I'm afraid that many old radios met their end in there, but I soon had boxes full of valves and spare parts under the bench. One type of wireless worked from an accumulator and had four wires that we would connect to the mains – the valves would glow brightly before going Bang!

Danger: Once, when taking a Radiogram to bits, I put the wire that fed the Gramophone motor to one side whilst we fiddled with the wireless part - which we managed to get working. Pleased with myself, I leant backwards and accidentally put my hand on the bare wires! Next thing I knew, TW and myself were in a heap outside the door!

My third den was a proper hut; it had a bench on the left, a set of drawers on the right, shelves for radios etc. and enough room for two seats. I had a crystal radio set and I remember receiving 'Journey into Space' one night and as soon as the show finished, the headphones went dead. It took me a while to figure out that Dad had been listening in home, and his aerial must have dragged the signal to mine. In my younger days, I had two basket chairs that when jammed together formed a hammock and made a great wireless listening post.

Walter Hickling came every two weeks to cut mine & Dads hair – any style you like so long as it was a basin cut. He used hand-operated clippers that were lovely and cold – when he did the back of your neck it sent shivers down your spine.

The house had a modernish (1930's) washing machine in the kitchen. It consisted of a 4 ft square birch structure 3 ft high with a 2 ft round x 2 ft deep copper bowl let in the top. At ground level was the fire grate that led under the boiler and then up its own chimney. Once a week, Mam took the wooden lid off, half filled the copper bowl with water, lit the fire and used a brush handle to stir.

She also had a Dolly tub (30" high x 18" round) with a punch (I liked that job). In the yard stood a big iron mangle. I preferred to turn the handle – it was safer than feeding clothes into the rollers. When folding sheets in the yard, she would nearly lift me off the ground when shaking the creases out. Her pride and joy was the hob in the front room. It was 4ft wide x 4ft high with fire on left and oven on right and a shelf with a chrome edge. The whole lot was black leaded every week.

## Clothes

No memories of clothes only short trousers until 14 when I wore a blazer & cap to Humphrey's. None of this silly label stuff - just wear what was there. Whoops! had a pair of Clarks shoes – you sat in a chair whilst a man measured your feet all-ways on a sloping bench (may have been to train my feet?).

## Food

Boiled egg with soldiers

Toast made on real fire using a 2 ft long fork

Yorkshire pudding (1/2" thick)

Cold toast & dripping (took school for breakfast – had Mars bar once a week)

Cobs from Billy Porters straight out of the oven on Back Lane cost 1/2p (480 to £1!)

Bag of chips with as much salt & vinegar as you liked from Clarkes Carvill's (3p!). Only Clarke could get so many in the bag – every inch of him shook!

Sweetshop on King Street sold "broken glass" toffee – suck carefully.

Hubbles chip shop – chips tasted a bit soapy but it had tables & chairs so you could eat posh.

Heart & Kidneys – Dad used to tie rabbits to the coalhouse door then pull the skin off.

Mam used to pluck & draw hens that stank – once, she showed me a handful of half formed eggs. Thanks again to the Hardy's.

Dad & Gramps new potatoes, peas and beans.

All sorts of fruit – from Aunties and scrumped.

## The Recky

Was this my first or second home? The main route from home was along the brook, under Waring's bridge, under Swan Street bridge (mind the pipe) and then over the stepping stones (grade 5/10). In the early days, there was a prefab in the centre with a flat asphalt roof that was ideal to use as a fort during battles, to use when playing hide and seek or tic (my favourite game of that era) or for jumping, climbing and general mayhem.

Diagonally across was a line of four big trees, one of which was climbable with the aid of 6" nails that some kind soul had provided. The area near Mucky Lane (Highgate Road) was a builder's tip with bricks, clay, bits of wood etc. Many happy hours were spent building and destroying things – we could find a use for anything - e.g. a ball of clay on the end of a stick, a sharp flick would send it flying – watch out! The bike course went round this area, straight along Mucky Lane, left through a gate, down a steep hill to the brook, over bumps to the bridge then left and round again.

My favourite tree stood here, on the edge of the road. Near the top was a bum-sized fork and I fitted a plank of wood to form a backrest. On a quiet day, or when I needed to get away from the world, I'd be up there reading (I had read most of the Tarzan books before I was 15 – after that it was Hank Jansen).

'The hollow', (now the football pitch adjacent to the brook) was full of Hawthorn bushes, undulating tracks, pools and a miniature jungle ideal for tic, scrambling and hide & seek.

Near the recky was an engineering firm where SH found a metal bar with a hole in one end. He got a box of match heads and poured it down the barrel before hammering in a tight fitting bolt. He jammed it in the ground near my tree, lit a small fire underneath, and waited; Later, a loud noise and puff of dust was seen in the goal mouth (Sibley Towns pitch now) – time for home!

### The Play Area

Sandpit: Didn't use much

The Boat and the Horse: Never sat in, stood on the running boards and found the rhythm.

The Spider: Looked good, but not enough weight, it would nearly stop if you jumped on.

The Roundabout: Heavy. You could stand on the top and look down on the red central ball until you felt giddy. Jumping on and off was a great pastime, but you needed the bigger lads to get it motoring.

Little Slide: For little children with their mammy's.

Big Slide: Geronimo! Hours would be spent in the summer collecting hay from the field and spreading it at the bottom of the slide. Candles were rubbed all over the brass and iron and the first few sliders had to shuffle their way down. Things improved though as the wax got a polish and we were soon flying off the end on to the mountain of hay.

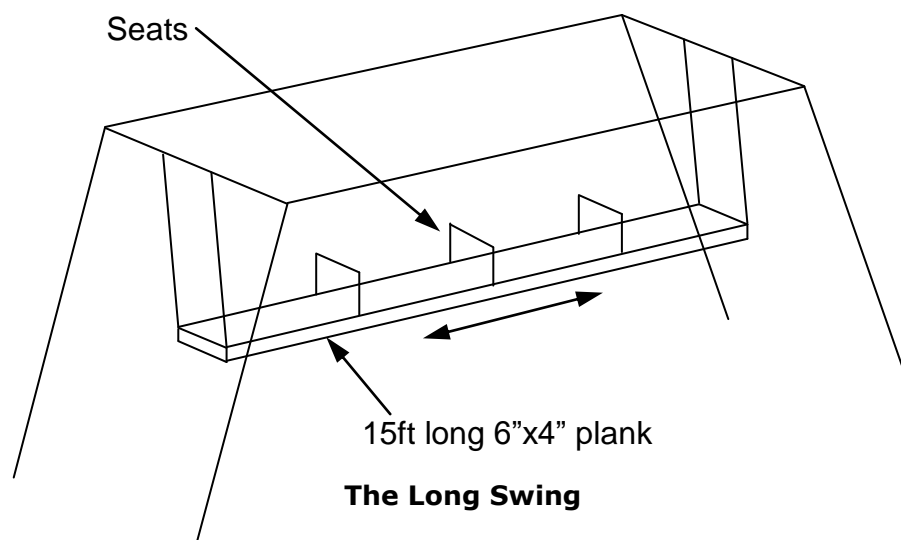
3 Small Swings: Would stand in the swing, talking or waiting for a turn on the big swing.

3 Big Swings: It was great fun standing, sitting or winding the chains up and spinning. One game was to swing as high as you dare and then on the forward swing, slip off the seat, land on the gravel and mark where your heels landed. Others would then try and beat your mark. Most evenings, light or dark, the swings were used as a meeting place; the older kids would sit on the swings, the younger ones on the floor or leaning against the uprights. Chat ranged from local gossip to discussions about films, football, trains or girls – everyone got a full education.

Concrete Posts and Rails: These were around the football pitch, and used for 'tissing' (spinning head over heels) forward and backward, one hand or two. They were ideal for walking along - the record was well over 10 lengths.

The Long Swing: (Sibley Community centre!) Was never sat on, you would stand either end and grab the upright bars and perform a 'S' shaped swaying motion until the vertical bars were swinging through some 1608 - at the limit of travel, a banging would herald the applying of the brakes (I would love to take it to the limit one more time!). It's hard to explain, but at one end your body is horizontal and facing down and at the other end you were facing up. One way to abandon ship was to leap to the left or right at the top of the stroke, grab onto the main frame and drop to the ground. Another way was to face outwards and at the right moment jump off. This developed into a competition to see who could jump the furthest. One day, MJ got the right moment alright, he went up and along some 10ft beyond the record and ended with a lot of gravel in his hands and knees – he put a brave face on, but we didn't play that game again!

Everybody was sad when some old people broke it one night (around 1955).



Think about that plank, any little kid walking by would have been in trouble.

Flat Areas: Football, Cricket, School sports – some school organised, some impromptu

Looking back, I think that we liked to test the park equipment to its limit with no intention of destroying it. When was it all removed? All of the modern stuff has tyres to prevent you hurting yourself. I have to say sorry to Mrs. Potter, the end house on the terrace – it had a lovely wall for throwing and catching tennis balls against.

# The Brook

The brook was handy to get from one side of the village to the other. Brook Street bridge was the place for building dams using bricks, sand and wood. Large paddling pools could be formed and there were no half measures – once the water got over the top it was Dambuster time. We fished for Sticklebacks and Gudgeon that were up to 6" long and looked like miniature sharks. When the brook was too deep to play in, everybody chucked something in upstream of the bridge and then rushed to the other side to see who won.

Railings: With feet on the bottom rail, and hands on the top, we shuffled sideways for large distances without touching the ground.

Brush with the law: When the floods covered Brook Street, I shuffled from Dudley's bridge to Back Lane bridge. As I descended a Policeman walked over, cuffed my ear and said 'Don't do that again' – I had my wellies on!

Up the Brook: This started where civilisation left off – the concrete bridge on the park. From here, the banks were varying heights. Geronimo time - leaping off a high bank to a lower one was the easiest and a good run up helped. Once, a boy (not me) came running up to the bank, missed the edge with his foot and disappeared from view; we didn't laugh much as most of the water got us.

At this time, there were no houses on the park side of Mucky Lane (Highgate Road) and no Heathcote Drive. The fields started at Wellbrook Avenue where a track ran parallel with the brook. This was the way to the Big and Little Hollows. The brook meanders through cowboy and indian country and passed a nice little field that was always full of Buttercups and Daisies.

Bad Day: We often had a pair of Yackers (catapult) in our pockets and stones were found in the brook. We were always shooting at birds; never hit any until one day I shot into a bush and killed a Yellowhammer – Sorry.

Further on, the brook changed to deep still pools with rapids in between all overgrown with several yards of jungle on either side. Nearby was the assault course; some 10ft above the water we traversed along the steep bank under and over tree roots, barbed wire and through swamps – real Tarzan country. I had another reading tree around there. There were ditches where field edges came down to the brook that made miniature canyons, one of which was called 'the spring' – lovely drinking water.

Beyond, the banks became clearer where the brook made a big S-bend and this was where the biggest Geronimo jumps could be attempted – once someone tried, everybody had to have a go.

The trapeze: This was the Mecca – I don't remember ever being the first there. The bank on the Seagrave Road side was a large flat area of nice grass with a few small trees that dropped some 6ft down to the brook. There was enough room for everybody. Nature grew a large tree right on the edge of the bank and provided a large branch at the perfect height. I don't know how the rope was put up. By grabbing the knot, leaping into the air and drawing your legs up, you could go swinging into space. First down towards the water and then up the opposite slope where, if you were lucky, you could land and climb higher for the return swing. If you missed your landing, you were condemned to smaller and smaller swings until your arms gave out – bath time!

Of course, we tried every combination that we could think of, but only one boy could swing back and forth arm bent and one handed (TG).

Down the brook: At the big 'M' railway bridge was a wire mesh fence next to the footpath – we could just walk along it with our backs to the wall. One day, AC slipped and fell with one leg down the back – he complained a bit but we finally got him out. Under the twin arches of Dudley bridge we jumped back and forth. From unknown fear we tiptoed quietly under the little bridge by the gasworks. On the left bank where the concrete stops, there was a good conker tree. There was one more small bridge before the river was reached.

Sibley swimming pool: Beyond the canal lock there was a brick arched bridge with rails either side that gave a grandstand view looking over a large deep pool with banks 3ft high. On the right there were three granite boulders where the young played. The pool shallowed



to form an island with water rushing both sides – a Geronimo jump got you on to it, but you usually wet your feet on the return journey.

Many happy days were spent here with anything from two to thousands of people. I can remember seeing family groups on both banks, some with chairs and picnic gear and groups of boys and girls (some from Mountsorrel) watching the diving, swimming and flirting displays. At various times, great logs, inner tubes and beach balls added to the entertainment. Another game was seeing who could balance furthest along the rails. As we became older and more adventurous we dived into the lock from the bridge, swam in the outflow and round to the mill waterfall which I didn't go near as I had heard tales of under currents. Another memory of the area was walking the gas pipe; some could do it easy. I tried it once, was alright until about half way across, and then a combination of the moving water and the swaying pipe forced me to get down and straddle the rest to get off. Watching the cricket was another pastime.

Ralph Bolland and I decided to dig to Australia on the waste ground opposite our houses – the hole was there for years about 2 ft deep.

## The Pit

At the top of Cemetery Road was an old brickyard with several circular kilns and derelict buildings. It had two disused pits, the longest of which had old railway lines hanging down the steepest side and this was the best way down. The bottom was flooded deep here, but was shallower towards the other end. Once, I caught 29 fish in one day! One day, SM and me were playing with a large plank in the shallow end where we used it as a bridge to lie on whilst we dangled a worm on a string to catch newts. Suddenly, 'Hey – come on you two it's 10 o'clock'. Dad was up top; he had come looking for us because we hadn't been home for tea. Don't time fly when you're enjoying yourself (no watches or mobiles then). The way into the other pit was a 1" pipe, which went out 6ft horizontally, and then straight down to the bottom. The trick was to swan along and then slide down. All sorts of junk lay in the bottom to mess about with. The water in this one was a bit grim, but was great for throwing things in.

Scrumpling – remember getting chased across a field near the pit. The farmer was shouting and my legs felt like lead but I got away.

War was declared between the Hobbswick gang and the Ratcliffe road gang. The battleground was outside Hubble's chip shop. Five of us were there first, we heard whooping and hollering and about 500 of them charging down the road. We made a tactical retreat and there was no aftermath that I heard of.

Delph hole, remember running around bushes – I might even have gone fishing there.

## Toys

When young, I had a fort with towers, drawbridge and entrance slope. Games were played with lead soldiers and Dinky cannons that fired matchsticks quite hard. The soldiers were set up along the walls and then we took it in turns to shoot the cannons until they were all dead. Meccano with its wheels, girders, rods, nuts and bolts could be used with most games.

Inventor: My mam was a mega knitter, often undoing one garment to make another. This entailed someone holding their arms out for hours and the wool being wound onto them to form a 'hank'. Then, after washing, the arms would be held up again to wind a ball. The Meccano saved the day – a revolving wheel soon freed me for more important activities.

Tennis Balls: Not used for tennis but for football, cricket, playing catch and floating down the brook (you could have races with two or more). Most satisfying was throwing them at the floor near to a wall and then catching them on the return (easy) or straight at the wall for a fast return (harder).

# Games

Snobs: Played anywhere with two or more people kneeling on the ground. The order as I remember: - ones, twos, threes, fours, house and then rabbit hutch. Vague memories that you stacked between 1 and 5 on a bent elbow and then flicked your arm down to try and catch them with the same hand.

'Cut the cabbage' – throw one up, pick one up, catch the first crossways.

'Fly dobs' – throw one up, pick one up, catch the first downwards (palm down) like grabbing a fly.

When you missed, the snobs were passed left.

Knife game: (don't know the proper name) The point of a Scout knife was placed on the first finger of the left hand and the top steadied by the right. The trick was to flick the knife so that it stuck in the ground. If successful, you repeated it using all the other fingers and thumbs, palm, wrist, elbow, shoulder, chin, head. When your turn came around again you carried on from your last failure.

Whip and top: Played on tarmac (school playground mostly). The string was wrapped carefully around the top and then held on the ground. With the index finger, the whip was snatched away thus setting the top spinning. Occasional whips kept it going and it tended to fly about a bit.

Chinks, Spans: Played with marbles, and any number of kids. The first marble (big or coloured) was rolled or pitched depending on the ground. Everybody then threw their marbles and the winner was the nearest. The previous game's winner picked up all marbles and threw to start the next game.

Conkers: When in season. We tried everything to strengthen them – soaking in vinegar, oven baking or hollowing out and then filling with bubble gum. The best were collected up at Ratcliffe College.

Dinky Cars: Car racing, mostly in the school playground. We would see who could get them to go the furthest whilst staying on their wheels. Anybody with more than a couple of cars was spoilt. In them days you looked after your car; I've still got mine!

Draughts: Grandpa and Dad taught me. I would play anywhere and anytime.

Chess: Must have learnt at school.

Cards: Grandpa tried to teach me Crib, but I never got it. Newmarket was played with grown ups. Also played 3, 7, 9 and 12 card Brag, Pontoon, Sevens, Snap, Patience, Clock and Crazy Eights, which I thought was the best (Bit like UNO today).

Dominoes: Played with family.

Monopoly: This was the king of games and played with four to six lads – Brilliant.

Lampposts: Swarmed up and sat on cross bar. Groups gathered around on dark nights. If cold, games of tic and hide & seek. I well remember running around the jitties yelling and laughing - did we frighten the old folk? – I don't think so as most of them could remember doing it themselves.

Roofing: Exploring – went over the circus roof etc. Got caught on the Simons roof because they were working late. They took me to an office for an inquisition and a right roasting. The parting line was "If we catch you again we'll tell your Dad" (he never found out)

I've mentioned other games that we played on the Recky etc. – practically everything we did was turned into a competition – did we invent the Olympics?

# Hobbies

**Stamp Collecting:** My first memory is of an album that I had stuck loads of stamps in, at least a full page of German. Unfortunately, I had used insoluble glue (called learning lessons the hard way). I started a new album most years and transferred the stamps that were now on stamp hinges (how many of these have I bent and licked?). Two or three times a year Mam would take me shopping in Leicester to a shop near the Palace; I've still got the stamps I bought there. Any duplicate stamps were kept in a tin to swap with other collectors. Comics carried adverts for approvals (a little book full of priced stamps) and the more you purchased, the cheaper they were. I would pick out the ones I wanted and then try to flog as many as possible to other collectors. My favourite stamps were a set from India with trains, boats, planes etc. and the portrait of King George V or VI. Canada had a lot of nice oblong stamps. Hours were spent pouring over a Stanley Gibbons catalogue and sorting the stamps out into sets (always some short) hoping to find your fortune.

**Coins:** These came in all shapes and sizes, round with holes, square with rounded corners, scalloped etc. My favourite was an Indian Rupee that had George VI with a crown. Looking back, everywhere we went, mam would say something like 'he sits for hours sorting out stamps, coins, fag cards, records and old radios'. I honestly didn't know about fishing! Often, they would reply 'hang on a minute, there's some in our draw/back-bedroom/hut that he can have'. There were a lot of French, German, Italian, Egyptian and Indian that were brought back from the war. I didn't get a world coin catalogue until I was nearly 50 years old.

**Fag Cards:** The only set I can remember collecting proper was dogs in Turf cigarette packets; I had to scour Swan Street for weeks to and from school trying to find an empty packet. Most days, I swapped spares with others – a clean one was worth about five others.

**Reading:** Mam must have taught me to read before I was born. I think Topper was the first comic I read; I definitely had Beano, Dandy, Wizard, Hotspur, Rover and The Eagle, from which my favourite characters were Dan Dare and the Mekon. I read every story – in one was a character called Wilson who was an all round athlete who would run to exhaustion and collapse over the line in a special way (how many other kids tried to sleep with straight fingers and bent knees?). I kept them all in neat piles in the bedroom which Mam threw away after I got married (sob sob!)

I had a full set of Roy Rogers comics; Mr Turnble helped me to bind them in the woodwork hut at school. One birthday (or Christmas), THE book arrived from Aunty Ivy, it was called 'The Pictorial Encyclopaedia' and was the bees knees. It had pages on everything under and above the sun – transport, nature, space, science, history, maths, inventions and much more. I probably learnt more from it than all my time at school.

**Novels:** I bought most of the Tarzan novels new (I've still got them), but others, once read could be swapped mainly with PL or RH who were two other avid readers. I remember one school book about a baby seal, its mother and a killer shark; I had to read a line or so every five minutes or the book would have been ruined.

**Bird Eggs:** Had a small collection of eggs. Climbed a tree where Greedon Rise is now and found an egg but it needed both hands to get it down – the trick was to put the egg in your mouth for safety. I got to the lowest branch and jumped down which resulted in a mouth full of eggshell! There was an owl's nest up the fields in a dead tree with hardly any bark. I made several trips and found nails etc. – once I even found a bent spoon.

## Train Spotting

Brook Street bridge, with its square concrete pillars made a nice grandstand for early collection of train numbers – spent many happy hours sitting cross legged with the book on my knees. All that was needed was a pencil and your Ian Allen book – bought a new one each year and carefully copied the entries from the last one (I must check if they're still sold!)

We soon progressed to Back Lane bridge where, by scrambling up the bank, the heat and noise could be felt to full effect! The bees-knees however, was the High Bridge where the secret was to get right over the line whilst the train was coming along. You had a few seconds to squint at the number plate (approx. 12" x 4") and memorise it before being engulfed in smoke (and sometimes steam if the driver playfully blew the whistle). Then, as your senses returned, it was checked off in the book. The bridge had a secondary function as a climbing frame; you would try and get from one end to the other without touching the floor.

Another place to collect was half way between King Street and the High Bridge on the church side. Just off the line was a 3ft high stage shaped structure made of old sleepers. It was quite secluded and we used to put coins on the Ekis line (Sibley term for Express line).

In the early fifties, we got wheels, so we went off to Rothley station for the LNER trains, but there were not so many. Somebody came up with the idea of Loughborough where the lines cross, but I don't remember finding a comfortable spot for collecting.

## Sunday School

My first memory is being on a stage in church with about 20 others singing in unison – I don't remember how many I did. Later I had Sunday school at the Methodist Chapel where we played games such as Musical chairs (which I liked) and a game where you stood in the middle of a circle of kids one of whom would mime an instrument and all the rest would copy - my job was to figure out which one started the mime (I was hopeless).

Charlie Harold gave us reading lessons in a side room with six of us sat around a table. One time, he was reading and I did my last real sneeze with mouth shut and a big glob of snot landed on the cloth that was very embarrassing - worse than the trousers falling down!

At some point, I did get a Sunday school prize that was a book called "Stubby sees it through".

I also remember belting out "all things bright and beautiful" and "we plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land".

## First Schools

### Infant School (Barrow Road)

Remember being in class when my Dad turned up to mend a window. I ran to him but the teacher shouted me back to my desk!

Dentist – two teeth out, blood everywhere.

Nurse – nice white haired lady who ran a comb through your hair

Does anyone remember the teachers?

My mam used to take me on the back seat of her bike before going to work at Danvers.

### Big School – Redlands

First day late! went in front doors, two grey pillars, looked up – it was my first face to knee with Mr Harrington.

My route from school was through the jitty that runs parallel to Swan Street. We used to have peeing contests and Dave could shoot further than anyone else. One boy used to creep up behind kids, stick his hand through their legs, grab hold and then march them round the

playground. I grew my thumbnail long and gave him a deep gash in the back of his hand – he didn't get me again.

### **Teachers:**

Miss Perkins – nice calm lady

Mr Greenwood – set the seeds of Geology etc.

Miss Lewin – frightening, if you didn't pay attention it was knuckles in the back.

### **Mr Turnbull:**

One of life's great teachers. Started us off with DIY in the woodwork shed where we made 12 test pieces that taught us how to use the different tools, clean them up and put them back. Proper workbenches with little vices. One test, Isometric drawing of a 1ft long piece of 2 by 1. One end was a semi-circle, the other a 45° point. 4" from one end was a 1" deep V shape and a 1" hole from the other end. Make and take to Mr T. who pointed out any faults – if wrong, you could make another.

After passing all the tests, it was up to you to design things (with help from Mr T.) I made a Viking ship with wooden ribs and cardboard planking. Also, he showed me how to bind my set of Roy Rogers comics into a red hardback book (how did he get the edges cut level?). Made a 2ft high x 1ft square plant table out of mahogany – fingers used to look black when French polishing.

There must have been other teachers and I never made it to Mr Hayes or Miss Snows class.

### **Whinge:**

It was decided that I was an also-ran at 7 years old, never mind the 11 plus exams. One day we were taken into the Assembly room and sat down with a load of forms and told to fill the first page in. The first question was to write your name in full – I had never been able to spell my middle name (Michael) so I sneaked a look at Michael Rennocks who was sitting near. It must have been the 11 plus exam as sometime later we got them back with red pen all over. There was a red line through my middle name! – Rennocks had spelt his first name wrong as well (Lesson – don't copy).

A few weeks later, 10 or 12 of us were taken to Humphrey Perkins and sat in a little room. Then, one by one, we were called into another room. The first out was a girl and we asked her what they had said. She said they asked who your favourite character from history was and she had answered Joan of Arc. When it came to my turn, I walked into the room and found three people sat at a desk opposite me. I got the same question and answered Joan of Arc! but they asked questions about her and couldn't answer – FAIL.

Was this the best or worse moment of my life? Everything after 11 years old would have been different. Is there another me travelling in a parallel universe?

## **Humphrey Perkins**

(All this in 40 weeks!)

Train from Sileby to Barrow-Upon-Soar and back. Val Murphy soon showed me how to stay on to go to Loughborough station where the train turned around and returned to Barrow.

### **Teachers:**

Mrs Everndon: Was the main teacher for the whole year that I was there – she was a bit posh for us.

Beryl the Peril (what was her real name?): Took us for history – she was a brave young lady.

Pud. Paine: Took us for religion – no messing with him.

Mr Foster: Maths – busy little guy who got me into maths but was a student teacher and had no chance. I came second in the last term.

**Woodwork:** Where? Who? I made a curved record rack, 20" long with slots to take 10" records. I remember bringing it home on the last day of school, going down the steps at the station and getting crushed into the iron gate at the bottom turning it into firewood.

**Sport:** Who? Nice bloke. Did running, shot put, high jump, javelin and discus. Once went to one of the Birstall schools (which?) to compete in high jump. Playing rugby one day, somebody kicked the ball straight into my stomach, winded me and I fell to the ground – the teacher instructed the others to drag me out of the way! – thanks!

**Gym:** Swinging and climbing ropes. I got quite good at vaulting off the springboard until once when I timed it wrong and found myself heading head first for the floor. Luckily, the very nice bloke caught me but I chickened out from doing it again.

**Steep learning curves:** First school dinners – 9 to a table, 4 each side, 1 at the top. Top 3 in charge of the food. Those at the bottom only got what the others didn't want – I soon got to be the right hand man. One day, the headmaster stood up, banged the table and shouted "Quiet". After he'd said it, you could have heard a pin drop. He continued, "stand up those that eat fried onions". One boy stood up. "Get the cook in here". She came with a what's up look and a tea towel. The headmaster said to her "no more fried onions, thank you!". The cook's mouth dropped open and she skulked back into the kitchen. A big cheer went up.

**Detentions:** Given by teachers for misbehaviour that meant doing homework. Soon sorted it out. The secret was to always have 2 detentions (with different teachers). Then, when one offered to set you homework, you could say you were doing Mr X's detention then sit and read a paperback instead.

**Milk Monitor:** Must have got picked for this job as the biggest in class (or best looking). It meant time out of class. The milk arrived near the boiler house and I had to set the crates up and hide a few in the gutter for bribes and friends. Think the bottles were 1/3 pint and I never had less than 3! (It was my first guttering job).

**The Cane:** Playing catch the ink well! As I threw it Mr Foster came in the door. John, who was supposed to catch it, missed and it broke a window. Mr Foster frog marched me to the headmaster (name?) who bent me over the desk and gave me a couple of whacks. The first two didn't hurt and I was wondering what all the fuss was about when the third landed in the same place – ouch!

**Fame:** Headmaster reads detentions out in assembly. G. Rose, 3 times in the first 6 detentions. He turns round to the teachers and asks, "What's happening with this boy?" Reply – "He's being dealt with sir".

**Cowboys & Indians:** We used to sneak off to some trees at break for a fag. One day, all the teachers sneaked around and herded us into the gym. They lined us up and confiscated everything in our pockets followed by detention.

**Dancing:** It was too wet for sports one day and the boys were forced to join the dancing class that made us feel right clumsy twits and the girls smirked at us.

**Cross Country Running:** "The road square". Turn right out of the gate, round to near Walton, down Nottingham Road and back to school. A Barrow lad showed us how to hang back a bit and then turn down a footpath that cut over half the square off. We would join in at the back after the others had passed. Then to showers.

**Showers:** Rows of naked boys – don't remember any soap. Felt embarrassed. Then to the changing room to dry (we must have took our own towels) and get dressed.

**Excitement:** Must have upset some lads one day. Four chased me into Mrs Everdon's room in the far corner. I turned and bared my nails – they stopped, looked and thought better of it. Made friends with one of the lads later and visited his home.

# Swimming

**Vestry Street** – only went once

**Kenwood Lido** – outdoor and a bit hard to get to.

**Cossy St.** – many visits, Bus stop at end of road, cake shop

**Various gravel pits** – Wanlip, Broome Lane

**Loughborough baths** – went fairly regularly on Saturday mornings on Howlet's bus. CP hit his chin on the diving board and nearly cut his tongue off.

We had hot meat and potato pies from a little shop near Pack Horse Lane. Two or three of them were magic after swimming.

# Entertainment

**Pictures:** Futurist in Sileby and The Rock in Mountsorrel. At Bert's Bughouse (Cinema that is now the Chemist's on Swan Street), we sometimes sat up on the balcony with Mam and Dad, but mostly in the front row on wooden benches. It cost 3d to see two films and the news (that's 160 films for £1!). The programmes changed on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Sometimes on Saturday mornings they showed serials like Batman, Flash Gordon, The 3 Stooges and cartoons. I didn't miss many in those days.

Tarzan films were my favourite; he was our hero and, for days afterwards, Sileby would ring to "haarr arrrggghhh arrrggghhh". I also liked cowboy films, and admit to being a Roy Rogers fan – Randolph Scott wore a bit thin after a hundred films. I remember everyone cheering when the cavalry came to the rescue, but I felt sorry for the Indians.

**Musicals:** I liked the music.

**Bambi:** Most remembered film – my shirt and jumper were wet through.

**Them:** Most frightening (rubbish now though!)

**Snow White / The Wizard of Oz:** Must be seen before the age of 10.

**The Flame and the Arrow:** Have you ever seen a bad Burt Lancaster film? – We were on the trapeze the next day.

**Seven Brides for Seven Brothers:** Still as good.

## Old Mother Riley

**Calamity Jane:** "Once I had a secret love". Learnt how to handle women from Howard Keel.

Later, I went to Loughborough on Sunday nights - Odeon, Victoria and Essoldo - one played "Poor people of Paris". We went to Bert's Bughouse one night and were given green and red 3D glasses; everybody was ducking and diving – in one bit, Frankenstein threw a great big burning log straight at me! Great stuff!

**The Institute:** I made many visits with different lads. We played snooker and billiards mainly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> table as the other two were for older experts. Cards, Draughts and Dominoes filled waiting times and it was a good place to hear stories of things to come.

**Boys Brigade:** I can only remember the white handbag and marching up and down the infant school playground.

**Scouts:** We had a funny hat and a knife; did we also have a staff? I passed second class, failed the first as I couldn't get the hang of Morse code or Semaphore. I enjoyed the games, the best of which was British Bulldog; everybody would be at one end of the long room and one of the older scouts would be in the middle. He would call one of the smaller boys (hopefully me) to try and get to the other end of the room without being caught, lifted from the floor and 'British Bulldog' being shouted. If he succeeded, you stopped in the middle to help him. All the rest would then run at the same time, and any losers would join the middle group. The winner was the last boy to be caught. It was total mayhem when the two groups were equally split.

AH and GR instructed us in knots, lashing poles together, Morse code and Semaphore. I always regret leaving, ashamed that I couldn't get Morse or Semaphore.

We did night manoeuvres up in the Big Hollow where a flag was stuck in the middle. Half of us would then protect the perimeter of the base while the other half would try to sneak up and set off a firework near the flag. They were good - the first thing I heard was the bang! I also remember marching around the village trying to keep in step.

Bob a job week: two of us went to a house near Unity Hall. The lady asked if we could dig her garden, we say yes and worked all afternoon for which she gave us some money. We told her that we would be back the next day but we never did - I had a guilty conscience and didn't walk past for years.

**The Fair:** Once or twice a year, the fair would set up in the field next to the park (later on it moved to its present location behind the Church). I got on well with the blokes and remember one called Spike who would let us help setting up. My favourite ride was 'Up and over the sticks' which had coaches and horses that went round in a circle and up and down over bumps. The horses had a grab handle and were later replaced by motorbikes. I would hang about for hours in the blind spot jumping on and off. It was easy to get on by grabbing a safety railing that went round with the ride, the motion did the rest; you had to make sure it was on the up slope when disembarking though. Never sat on the horse but stood with feet on bottom rail, bum on top and went around swaying at the hips. Or stood on the middle rail with the back of your knees on the top bar; I headed a couple of bulbs doing this!

**Shooting/Coconuts:** Had to have a couple of goes each year.

**Slot machines:** 480 goes for £1! (Proper money)

Got a photo of me and Dad on the dodgems.

## Radio

### Music:

Children's Choice

Housewives Choice

Family Favourites - only place to hear modern music.

My first bought record: At thirteen, me and Tony Widdowson used to go to Cossy St. baths in Leicester on Saturdays. We used to go to a cake shop afterwards and there was a record shop next door. We pooled our money together, including the bus fare home and bought a 78rpm record called "Swedish Rhapsody" by Mantovani. It was a nice walk back to Sileby weren't it Tony!

### Comedy Programs:

Rays a Laugh

Much Binding in the Marsh

Take it from here

Educating Archie

Life with the Lyons

Have a go with Mable at the Table

### Serials:

Dick Barton

Mrs Dale's Diary

The Archers - I still listen!

Journey into Space



## **Others:**

Down your Way

20 Questions

Letter from America

We Beg to Differ

What happened to the names from the BBC Light Programme?

Ted Ray, Jimmy Edwards, Tommy Trinder, Fred Emery, Gilbert Harding, Wilfred Pickles, Arthur Askey, Sam Costa, Ben Lyon and Elsie & Doris Waters.

## **Television**

Mam and Dad used to go to the Cons' club on Saturday nights and I sometimes sat with JL staring at their 6" TV. At the Coronation in 1953 (I was 13), Mam and Dad bought our first TV. The living room was full, and I had to sit on the floor (big lip out). It's hard to separate early programs from the later ones. Amos & Andy on Sunday nights at the Palladium, Sylvia Peters, Quatermass, Little Red Monkey (if home alone, I would be behind the settee).

## **The Cold**

My first memory of the cold was the winter of 1947. We had loads of snowball fights; we would stand at the house end of our bridge (half way along The Hobbswick) where I lived and take on anybody walking along the jitty. We had a slide on the school playground that ran from the clock down to the front wall. 'Little Man' meant squatting down while sliding along. 'Tall Man' was standing upright with your arms down by your sides and your feet together – not easy! More often than not, you ended up waving your arms about to keep your balance. After one particularly heavy session, we went into Assembly and stood next to the radiator; we stayed well wrapped up and got hotter and hotter until the next thing I knew, I was coming around in the secretary's office.

The brook would often freeze over, allowing us to slide along the edges; the middle part was usually too thin and unsupported as the water level dropped. We had plenty of fun smashing through this and forming crevasses.

I remember sledging for the first time when I was about seven with Dad. It was on the Recky near Mucky Lane (Highgate Road) down the slope. Someone had taken a square of turf and if you hit this then the sledge stopped but you didn't! We also sledged at the back of the Catholic church and on Byat's Field (between High Bridge and Homefield Road) which was a big hill that was great for going down but you had to roll off before hitting the barbed wire at the bottom and it was a long walk back up.

## **Pain**

Went up bowling green with Betty Henson's kids (Mam's friend) and we set up a bench at 45 degrees to slide down. I stopped half way down with a big splinter up the bum. It was an Hospital job and Mam kept the 2 inch long splinter in a jar for years.

Playing in Archie Wards wood shed, I swung under a rack of wood but the one that I was holding was not fixed and it came and hit me on the bridge of my nose. I had to go Doctors for stitches and I've still got the scar.

Came running down station jitty onto road and a man on a bike knocked me over. His pedal came down on my head and it threw him off in a heap. I had to have my scalp clipped back – again, I've still got the scar.

## Girls

Fancied a few but I was very fussy and they had to live up to Tarzans Jane (Ester Williams), Debra Paget and Joan Price.

**First Snog:** Visited Uncle John who lived in Leicester and this mad girl about 5-8 years old commandeered me. Can remember both of us sitting in one cinema seat and the usher man came along and shone his torch. The crowd were highly amused.

**First Girlfriend:** She lived where the Doctors is now. She moaned about wanting a dolls house so I offered to make one (I was about 10). Her ideas were different to mine and it ended up as 4 bits of plank with bent nails. We didn't suit.

## Work

**Hop Picking:** Can remember collecting Rosehips out of hedges. Did we hand them in at school? did we get paid? We also used them as itching powder and shoved them down people's shirts.

**Tater Picking:** Shuttlewood's and Barber's farms etc. (school used to announce where and when). Saturdays, 8am to 4pm for 8 shillings and 6 pence (45p) plus a bag full to take home for Mam – money for old rope.

A tractor with a spinner on the back went up the row and shot spuds out up to 10ft. Your job was to collect them into boxes before it came back and did it again! It was an hard day if damp. Biking home once from Shuttlewood's, I fell off outside Porters paper shop and the spuds and me went everywhere.

**Paper Rounds:** When I was about 12, I started delivering papers along Ratcliffe Road & Greedon Rise. On Sundays I had a list of people that owed money and I had to knock them up to collect it. Later, when I had a bike, I had a round with only 19 papers. Starting from Fords shop at the bottom of Swan Street and delivering to Cossington Road, Quaker Road, Mountsorrel Lane and Barrow Road.

I got 3/9d (18p) per week! and had to work 7 days a week starting at 7 o'clock on weekdays and 8 o'clock at the weekend.

With all this money I was quite rich and managed to save enough to buy a Hornby wind-up train set which I've still got.

See **Home** section for more work - I was a slave!

## Holidays

**Skeggy:** We went up either on the train or bus for some 12 years on the trot using the same digs each time – I knew every inch of the front. One memory, when I was small, is paddling out to a sand bank with a bucket and spade and playing for some time. On trying to return, I found out that the water was too deep and started panicking. Luckily, Dad kept his cool and shouted to me to walk along parallel with the beach until the water shallowed.

We also had Sunday school day trips to Skeggy, Mablethorpe or Cleethorpes. With a bus full of kids, it seemed to take hours to get there, but the return journey went really quick. School sometimes took us on trips to Bradgate park.

**Blackpool:** When I was 15, Mam and Dad decided to take me to Blackpool for a week's holiday. It was a bit different to Skeggy to say the least. I stood gob smacked at the side of the road watching four lanes of buses all going the same way. It was the first time a little Sibleby boy realised how big the world is! It seemed like the whole world was there, we covered every inch of the streets and promenade at least ten times, and it was a lot longer than Skeggy.

**Blackpool Fair:** Wow, the Grand National, Big Dipper, Roller coaster and best of all, the Funhouse. Once you had paid, you could stay in as long as you wished! It was a great barn of a place, full of unbelievable slides, 20ft long x 6ft diameter revolving barrel, tread mills, moving stairs etc.

My favourite was this horizontal 6ft diameter smooth wooden disc surrounded by an 18ft diameter x 1ft high circle of red padding. Every now and then, the disc would stop, and as many as 20 would pile on – linking arms and legs. A man on a balcony above would start the plate turning, slowly at first before gathering speed. The heap of bodies would start to slide whilst trying to stay on as long as possible before finally finishing up in a heap on the red padding. It was then a race to try and get back on and sit in the middle before the others jumped back on. This went on for hours until a leg or ear hole was ripped off or sheer exhaustion set in.



Fortunately, I was able to take my kids before it sadly burnt down in 1991.

Also in Blackpool we visited the Tower, the Circus, the three piers and went rowing in Stanley Park.

Thanks Mam and Dad that was the perfect way to end 15 years of irresponsibility.

Unfortunately, this is when my first pinball went through the flippers – I had to get my nose to the grindstone, literally, as my first job was grinding at Kenny Grabs.

Work seriously endangers your time.

**If you have made it this far, you must be interested – how about doing your take on your childhood.**

## List of Friends, Compatriots and Enemies

All these and more enjoyed similar excitement in the days before TV. I can remember bits about most of them if anyone wants to chat. I have used an old school photo to jog my memory. I can't put a name to some of the faces – maybe they are 'foreigners' because in about 1950 I remember climbing trees in an orchard where Greedon is now.

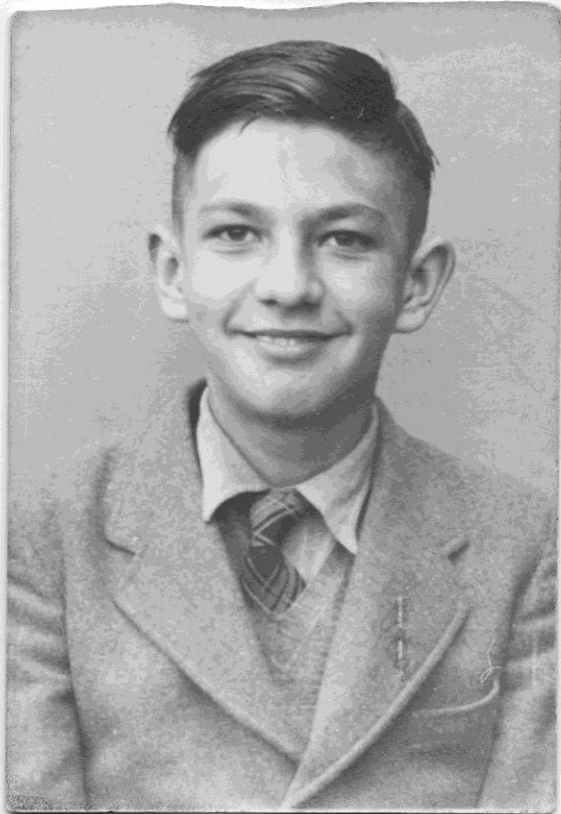
Adams, Dave	Marshal, Geoff
Addison, Skinny	Martin, Mary
Barber, John & Geoff & Fred	Matthews, Brain & Sylvia & Dorothy
Beadles	Middleton, Alan & Rodney
Billy (lived up jitty between school and High bridge on right hand side)	Middleton, Susan
Blower, Pauline	Moss, Reggy
Blueman, Judy	Murphy, Val
Bolland, Ralph	Newby, Elver & Brother
Bostock, Sheila	Percival, Barry & Brother
Brewin, Edwin	Perry, ?
Burton, David	Piggins, Rex
Burton, Keith	Poole, Glenda & Marilyn
Buxton, Rodger	Porter, Brenda
Cameron, Dave	Porter, Stodger
Cavendish, Keith & Sister	Porter, Valerie
Chamberlain, Ernie (Quorn)	Preston, Geoff
Chapman, Arthur (Barrow)	Price, Dave
Clever, Eric & Sister	Ratcliffe, Graham & Angeline
Collins, John & Dennis	Rennocks, Michael
Croni, Patrick & Mick	Renolds, Mick
Curtiss, Alan & Brother	Roberts, Dave
Dakin, Ian	Rowe, Barry
Dakin, Tony	Saunders, John
Dickings, Barbara & Brenda	Sharp, Diana
Faulds, Terry	Shaw, Edward
Ferrin, John	Shaw, Maureen
Foster, John	Sibson, Reta
Fowler, Hilary	Simmons, Graham
Fox, Barry	Smith, Ann
Freeman, Mick	Smith, John (Mountsorrel)
Galbraith, Ian (Quorn)	Smith, Tony & Pete
Green, Gus (black hair)	Stamford, Dave
Green, Gus (white hair)	Staples, Dave
Green, Tony	Stringer, Pauline
Grewcock, Tom & Judy	Toone, Margaret
Halford, Rodger	Tow, Sheila
Hall, Derek	Turlington, Roy
Hall, Josephine	Turner, John
Hardy, John (Seagrave)	Upton, Dorothy & Sister
Hardy, Stuart	Walker, Kieth & Ken
Harriman, Tony & Rodger & Malcolm	Ward, Arthur
Harrold, Dave	Ward, Arthur (Arch Wards lad)
Iliffe, Elaine	Ward, Gilbert
Jalland, Geoff	Wearing, ? (sisters)
Jordan, Mick	Wheeldon, Willie
Kidger, Janice	White, Michael
Knight, Joe?	Widdowson, Tony & Fred & Joan
Lark, Geoff & Bernard	
Latkin, Paul	
Lea, John & Sister	Maureen & Carol (two girls living in Hobbswick in 40's)



Is he going to shoot me  
or what?



Edwin, Connie and Geoff Rose.



I think needle must be  
from when I was binding my  
Roy Rogers comics with Mr Turnbull.



Geoff with Judy Blueman  
outside Auntie Ethel's Albion Road.



**When we were proud to wear school badges S.C.S Sibley**



**Only decent picture of Sibley swimming pool I have (behind photographer) would like to see more**



**Leaving Humphrey Perkins**

# The 2<sup>nd</sup> Pinball!

Sileby 1955-1960

As seen by Geoff Rose

In 1955, I left school aged 15 and had a choice of three jobs. Dad was a plumber and recommended against it (kiss of death later).

## **Job 1: Kenny Saunders Engineering (Sileby)**

I spent the first morning grinding pips off ½ inch diameter x 10 inch long iron bars. As fast as one ammo box was done, another arrived a few days later but I finally got to the end of the order. Over the next few weeks, they tried me on everything:

- Facing bolts on a lathe required the handle to be turned very slowly (I went too fast).
- Slotting screws: Put screw in collet, push against circular saw, take out and repeat thousands of times (I broke the saw blade).
- Finishing square bolts to polish them on a rotating sander (got my hand caught).
- Drilling and tapping was another delicate task (I went too fast).

Alan Hart was the inspector and he nearly sucked his teeth out sometimes. Then they put me on packing and yard work with a chap from Cossington. It was a great job using counting scales, washing & packing finished orders, and unloading 20ft long round, square and hex iron bars from lorries. About a month later there was a kerfuffle (nothing to do with me), my mate was sacked and I was in charge. This was great as I could now wander round the factory collecting finished goods and delivering iron bars to Ernie on the automatics; fantastic machines that did six operations at once – I could watch them all day.

Got to like work.

Arthur Chapman (knew him from school) worked there and we spent tea breaks together. At the back of me were four big lathes in a row – the men had to stand there all day swinging levers and turning handles. One day, a chap walked to his mate to ask him something when the boss came round the corner and barked "Switch your machine off if you're talking".

A lorry came into the yard with a bundle of steel that had slid right through the cab and under the dashboard - the driver said "I had to brake hard – you always make sure it's loaded on the passenger side".

After about six months, all the new kids had a medical in the office. After listening to my chest, the doctor turned to foreman and asked "Does this lad do heavy work?". I was sent Leicester etc. to see what wrong and by the time I got the all clear, the factory had set on Eddy Ballie to help. Me being only 15, I was back to being the underdog but I'd tasted power and that was it so I left. This was a life changing moment, would I have stayed there if my chest was ok?

## **Job 2: British Thompson-Houston (Leicester)**

Tom Barradale from Cossington got me the job in 1956, we met on the bus every day. Mr May (a suit man) explained and demonstrated how to make Nernst filaments (something to do with radar). He said they were new and I would be in charge of the department as it got larger!

First thing was to go to the lab and mix various, carefully measured chemicals with acetone and pot balls to roll 24 hours in the mill. Then remove, dry and collect every bit and mix into a stiff paste with water using a mortar and pestle. Then over to Mary's department to extrude it (like a mini sausage machine) into matchstick size pieces; these were laid in a tungsten dish and pushed into a hydrogen furnace. Got about 50 in a batch and managed over 1000 a day. Next over to the stores for rolled platinum wire to cut, fold and tie to each end in a special way.

Then they were washed in hydrochloric acid and given three coats of paint made from the paste and fixed in a rack. After drying for 24 hours in a big square oven, I had to test a quarter of the batch to destruction in a very bright lab wearing dark glasses and noting whether they passed or failed. I packed the rest in a dinky box with cotton wool.

Soon got an overlapping system going and only needed 50 per week so had time to go loo for quarter of an hour four times a day for reading. Wore a grey lab coat with big pockets.



I once whistled Mr May and he virtually lifted me off the ground and told me to never do it again.

There was a good social / canteen hall where I played pitch-and-toss and table tennis with Cliff Perkins from Barrow. Had a Christmas dance where I won first prize in a raffle (a 2ft high doll with a lovely blue velvet cloak), mam was chuffed and we called it Susan – still got her somewhere. Took strawberry jam sarnies until I was sick of them. Some dinners I met Ras Taylor in the Speedway pub where we'd drink and play cRasy-eights.

From my desk in the factory I could watch the girls doing their bit on the fluorescent tube line. One of them (Pip) fancied me but she was the clinging vine type and was always touching and trying to hold my hand – she soon scared me off. Another life changing moment was when My May moved me to the top end of the factory where I was looking at a big green wall which was boring! Just around the corner worked a giant West Indian (Charlie) who was a lovely easy going chap who mixed chemicals on a large scale in tubs big enough to swim in. He taught me about siphons with a 2" U-tube when he was washing the vats out.

I must have moaned well at home as dad finally gave in and asked Uncle George to give me a trial for an apprenticeship.

### **Job 3: J. Collington & Son (Sileby plumbers)**

Phone number was Sileby 238!

My deed of apprenticeship was signed 27<sup>th</sup> June 1957.

Plumbing exams in summers of 1958 and 59.

W H Webster took over my apprenticeship 16<sup>th</sup> Nov 1959.

Dug drains down near Warring's bridge (now Bustle bridge) and by dinner time I could hardly stand as my legs were like jelly. I had gone to seed sitting about for the last year.

The hours were 7:30-5:30 with a half hour break at 12:30 and half days on Saturdays. Sunday work in factories paid double time.

The foreman (Jack Bradley) treated me like a dog – if he answered morning it was a good day! My dad Edwin (I called in Fred) was plumber's mate (His sister was Ivy Collington who was married to George).

Early on, I was left in the workshop quite a lot so I set to and cleaned and tidied it up. It was quite big with a 20ft bench, pipe and fitting racks, and areas for lead and glass. Outside was a couple of sheds, more pipes, scrap and rubbish heaps. The boss had a red Vauxhall Crespa with lots of chrome which was nice to clean. One of the best jobs was at Brays factory where an 100 ft long lead and wood gutter running between two bays was rotten and leaking. Jack, Liam (a carpenter) and I spent about 2 months stripping out and replacing it together with slates and windows. I got brown on this job.

Jack and me carried the ladder up High St; he went up, looked at roof, came down again and said "Fetch some slate nails". I whizzed back to the shop, grabbed a tin full and shot back. Jack was leaning on the ladder talking to somebody. He looked at me and said "Where's the hammer?" (His way of learning one to think?).

I was knocking a hole in a brick wall when Jack said "Come on I could hit it harder with me hat" so I held the hammer out to him. He went purple and said "Don't ever do that again" (Dad said he had a bit of a job not to burst out laughing). Jack was hard but he knew his job; bathrooms, tiling and heating. We did Mr Greys house, boiler and radiators all with threaded iron pipes – me outside with the vice, sawing, hand threading, delivering one length and getting measurements for the next.

The firm had a van for big jobs and a handcart for local jobs. I can remember dad & me pushing it up Seagrave Rd with a ladder, sand, cement and tools etc. on a hot day. Every few yards dad would have to press the handle down to hold the leg on the road (the brake) to have a rest. This was the first time I had prickly heat.

This was probably the best 4 years and I loved work most of the time, especially working with dad who knew everybody in Sileby having spent all his life there. I was known as Edwin's lad which made me proud.

## College

I was going to Loughborough College 1 day and 2 nights a week and discovered a pinball machine (5 balls = 5 life changes!) in the Unicorn pub – I made many visits over the next 10 years and drank plenty of Woodpecker cider. Mr Jones was a great teacher and there were only five of us in the class and there were all nice lads. I sat with John Hewet and learnt a lot from him maths wise. Phil was the best lead worker by far – I'll never forget his City & Guilds piece.

## Music

Sometime in 1955 (maybe my birthday), I became the owner of a new gramophone just as the world changed as this gang hit the airwaves:

- Bill Haley, Rock Around the Clock (1955).
- Gene Vincent, Be-Bop-A-Lula (1956) & Bluejean Bop (1956)
- Elvis, Blue Suede Shoes (1956) & Heartbreak Hotel (1956) etc.
- Little Richard, Tutti Frutti (1957) & Long Tall Sally (1957).
- Jerry Lee Lewis, Great Balls of Fire (1957) & Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On (1957).
- Eddie Cochran, C'mon Everybody (1959) & Somethin' Else (1959).

If you weren't in your teens in the 50's you wouldn't believe the change from pre to post 1955 music.

## Social Life

Celebrated 16<sup>th</sup> birthday in the Swan with Mick Jordan, Rod Taylor and Arthur Chapman. This soon developed into regular Saturday night bouts. Nights at Leicester Palay (Palis), drinking and learning to rock'n'roll. There was also a dance hall above Burton's near the clock tower. I got insulted at a dance hall up London Rd near Victoria park – I asked a girl for a dance and a fast song came on, I only touched the floor twice! Wow! When the music stopped, she turned her nose up and said "I thought the man was supposed to lead!".

Getting home helped to sober us up – one time, we missed the last bus and somebody said there was a late train so we ran up there but no luck. Got walking, going along Belgrave we came across a girl walking home to Birstall so we escorted her home and got rewarded with a cup of coffee. Onwards to Rothley house where a chap pulls up and offers to take the three of us in his 6x4 trailer. (Mam got the muck out of my suit). Another way to get home was to bus it to Syston then walk along the railway.

Don't know how many thousands of times I/we went to Bert's pictures and dances in Sileby. I guess a minimum of twice per week, week-in week-out from 1947. This is from my wife's diary (we met in Sileby pics in Dec 1957):

	1958	1959	1960
Sileby pics	102	67	22
Rock'n'roll dance	53	68	2
Loughborough pics (mostly Victory double seats)	20	37	14
Unity dance hall	2	14	29

We took over the corner seat near the door in Bert's so we could nip round the Swan for a drink in the interval.

It seems Bert's rock'n'roll dances started in April 1958 and Unity hall weekly dances in Aug 1959. Unity also had Christmas and New Year dances.

Went to Blackpool illuminations with Arthur Chapman, Charlie Middleton (who lived on Brook St) and Charlie Bland. Had a day in Skeggy in 1959.

## **Clothes**

Mick Jordan and Ras Taylor were young teddy-boys at weekends so I joined in. Suits and coats were bought at John Colliers shop in Belgrave Gate, Leicester. One felt very slick ordering a black finger length coat with seamless back and slit pockets (no flaps) and 8" drain pipe trousers with no turn-ups. Shocking pink or lime socks were worn with my pride and joy black suede shoes with gold trimmings (Saxophones, musical notes and edge banding). My hair was waved back with Brylcreem. I regret never having a velvet collar – Mick had one on his light green coat and Ras on his light blue coat. These coats lasted for years and I got married in one and wore them into my 40's. I also had a zip up jerkin which was black with blue shoulders – it felt good on the bike.

## **Misc**

Swam down the river in July 1958 and again on 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1959 (we had a good summer then).

Got my first motorbike in 1959.

# TV

1950-70 Andy Pandy  
1951-63 What's my line  
1952-61 Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School  
1952 Dragnet  
1952-4 The Flower Pot Men  
1953-9 Quatermass  
1953-83 The Good Old Days  
1954 The Grove Family  
1954-7 Amos 'n' Andy  
1954-6 The Cisco Kid  
1954 Fabian of the Yard  
1955-9 The Adventures of Robin Hood  
1955-76 Dixon of Dock Green  
1955 Double Your Money  
1955 Hopalong Cassidy  
1955 I Love Lucy  
1955-7 The Roy Rogers Show  
1955 The Sooty Show  
1955 Take your pick  
1956 The Adventures of Champion  
1956 Davy Crockett  
1956-70 Gunsmoke  
1956 Hancocks Half Hour  
1956 Highway Patrol  
1956 Jack Benny Show  
1956 Whack-o (Jimmy Edwards)  
1956 Opportunity Knocks  
1956-73 Lassie  
1956 The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp  
1956 The Lone Ranger  
1957-61 The Army Game  
1957-67 Emergency Ward 10  
1957 Hawkeye and the Last of the Mohicans  
1957 Lenny the Lion  
1957 New Adventure of Charlie Chan  
1957-61 The Phil Silvers Show (Bilco)  
1958-61 Cheyenne  
1958 Ivanhoe  
1958-64 The Larkins  
1958 M-Squad (Lee Marvin)  
1958 77 Sunset Strip  
1958 Wagon Train  
1958 Zorro  
1959 Bronco  
1959 Have Gun will Travel  
1959-62 Maverick (Jack Kelly)  
1959-65 & 1982 Noggin the Nog  
1959 No Hiding Place  
1959 The Rifle Man  
1959 Tales of Well Fargo  
1959 The Third Man (Michael Rennie)