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Metro-Land

The Years of National Government

1929 – 1939

Setting the Scene

This is a researched account of an English town... covering a period just before I was born, in 1935, and later times - lived through, and remember. It attempts to describe a ten year period 1929 – 1939... to give a feel for the age and times. Others, more learned, have stamped the time ‘The Great Depression’. Here is one place where the saying didn’t apply... North Harrow was designed for a new generation of urban dwellers – mainly young married couples all full of hope.

I mustn’t colour the picture too brightly nor make the line too sharp, for memory can play tricks... What is important though is to give sufficient detail to make it obvious that my subject is the latest ‘garden’ town – newly built to a pattern, using the latest materials, in the architectural style of the period. It was designed for commuters, from every corner of England, working, for the most part, in businesses in and around London..., a young optimistic community starting out in life, ready to make a go of it! There was no unemployment... the majority of women stayed at home - looking after the house, and children. No child went to school without shoes or socks; there were no soup kitchens or riots, pickets or disturbances. It was calm and tranquil, clean and bright. The town had a full range of shops, and one cinema. There wasn’t a theatre, factory, office block or car park. The policeman walked his beat; the road sweeper swept the leaves into the gutters – the colourful piles defying the wind... It describes a time when the rag-and-bone-man sang his call... the milkman, coalman, and baker, delivered by horse and cart, the onion seller, knife grinder and scrap-iron merchant circled the roads shouting their wares.

To one side stands a pram, with its charge inside, asleep... they are outside the front-door, catching the morning sun - creating a shadow on the ground. The frill of the stretched sun-shade flutters gently. Leading off, down the tiled front path, the bow topped gate swings on its hinges. Not a sound disturbs the sleeping youngster... all is at peace.

CHAPTER I

GREAT DEPRESSION: BRITAIN'S POSITION - Wage Reductions – General Strike – Gold Standard – Parity of the Pound – Economic Crisis – Public Spending – National Government – Unemployment – Unaffected Areas – Population Explosion – Housing for the Many – New Towns.

From many sources it has been declared, 'a time of depression' - coming from a lowering of workers wages. This industrial slump, or sharp decline, had, as its source, The First World War. Britain lost its position as the worlds leading economy in the late thirties - just before that war. The depression was all that was needed to cast Britain down... to finally lose out to the other main European economies - in the 1970s.

In May 1929, a General Election gave Labour 287 seats, while the Conservatives had 260. Baldwin resigned, and MacDonald took office again. This Labour government needed the support of the Liberals, for on its own it lacked power to affect change - limited radical thinking. Later that year, the Stock Market Crash in New York, saw the beginning of The American Depression which had a knock-on effect to Britain. The main

effect was felt in the north where most of Britain's heavy industry is located. The opposition parties demanded further cuts including the public sector workers wages, putting a brake on government projects. What further hurt the poor was a cut ordered in the payment of unemployment benefits. MacDonald appointed four Ministers – Thomas, Lansbury, Johnston, and Mosley. This special body of politicians had the specific task to deal with the problem of unemployment.

WAGE REDUCTIONS: GENERAL STRIKE.

The period from the General Strike in 1926, when the union leaders fully appreciated the political implications of their industrial action wouldn't lead anywhere, till today, has seen the integration of the unions into all processes of government. State assistance to particular industries integrated the Government into both what the managements and unions wanted. This was necessary with the beginnings of rearmament and ultimately war. The General Strike set the march of the unions back, losing half a million members from the congress.

The Government feared complete industrial and social dislocation, which seemed inevitable. There were thousands of trained officers and men in civilian life and a sufficiency of army transport. The Territorial Army was a considerable force. My father was involved by his position as a senior sergeant in the Territorial's, and as a manager of one of the railway company's freight distributors. His prime position put him in place to organize a civilian response. Plans were made to stock food and petrol. Reliable men drove Underground trains, buses and used their private cars as taxis. The trade unions had been given convincing proof that this was going on, and that the rest of the country was not prepared to see chaos. Arrangements were made for the Territorial Army to act as Auxiliary Police, and even be

paid a subsidiary allowance. They had little to do for the strike soon over. However, the trades union were left in no doubt of the effective use which could be made of the Territorial Force.

GOLD STANDARD, PARITY OF THE POUND.

After the war the troops returned home – most to return to their previous jobs. As they did so, the women who had been doing some of those jobs were dispensed with – pushing them aside to find work in domestic service, the retail trade, and the clothing industry. Britain had to change from war production to peacetime using worn out machine tools and inappropriate production lines. It was an impossible task; there was no chance of amassing sufficient capital - from a depleted order book, to reach a pre-war investment position. The government was advised by The Bank of England to make the pound the same value as the pre-war dollar, nearly five dollars to the pound – convertible to its value in gold. The result made British exports more expensive, reduced demand, cut productivity and naturally, increased unemployment. The country already had a large number of unemployed; employers knew they could replace discontented workers, they also knew they could lower the price of their goods if they reduced wages... which they did! The workers were already paid very little objected to a further reduction. The Trades Union Council called for a General Strike, to support the miners who were already on strike against wage cuts and longer hours, May 1926. Although it was called a general strike it was only for key workers: in transport, iron and steel, building, printing and electricity. Naturally enough this had the effect of shutting down most union controlled businesses for want of power. Even though the strike was over quickly the effects of this, on top of returning the pound to the Gold Standard was that the country stayed in recession...

My father, managing the distribution and collection of freight, from Paddington main line station, organized his managers, office workers, and sympathetic university students to carry on moving the freight. When possible he loaded and drove a team of horses, in company with others, all through the strike period. The Transport and General Workers Union's finances were in a dire straight. Not only was the union losing members but those that were members were not paying their membership fees.

There were no factories in North Harrow and other dormitory towns, any large offices, or distribution centres. Most of the men, and the few women, who were working, were white collar workers. The majority of outer London citizens voted Conservative, who was in office – This was the time of Baldwin's Second Ministry. Two years later, in 1928, women achieved the vote – were enfranchised, at the age of twenty-one.

ECONOMIC CRISIS

The General Election in May 1929, brought Ramsey MacDonald, and the Labour Party, into office. Their main programme was to sort out the unemployment problems – to return the nation to work. Their majority was small. MacDonald called on the Liberals to help. They were influenced by the economist thinking of Keynes who advised a massive programme of public works inline with the thinking of the Labour minister Oswald Moseley and party back benchers. This solution was eminently sensible but was rejected by the cabinet. Sixteen weeks later the Stock Market Crash occurred in New York which, coming on top of Britain's already critical industrial scene, was immediate and devastating. It is unnecessary to describe how the government and the nation considered this event. By 1930 there were two and a half million unemployed. It did not stop there! In

Germany the banking system collapsed. There was a run on the pound. The cabinet would not agree to cuts in spending or in reducing the unemployment benefit.

PUBLIC SPENDING

When looking at Government Figures of central government spending, to give some sort of overview indicating hard times, and times of plenty, the conclusions can only be an approximation. However, what figures one can research do give an expected graph – the national debt in 1920 was gradually reduced, to rise to the same point twenty-four years later – showing a uniform curve. Thereafter, the rise maintained.

What we are interested in are the figures for the end of our period and what they were preparing us for. Over the thirties the government department showing the greatest rise is Social Services. This includes health, welfare and education. That department drops back to allow Military Defence to outstrip all others, peaking out in 1943/4. The drop continues... an expected result.

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Arguments in the Labour party, including some ministers, split the government. Stock market investors took fright withdrawing their money... destabilizing the economy. The upset, caused by the social welfare cuts, broke up the government. Instead of resigning MacDonald accepted a commission from the King to form a so-called 'National' Government, dominated by Tories – particularly by, the Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain. The Labour party objected to this coalition, abandoning MacDonald and his supporters. The weak political strength of the government

contributed towards the call for a General Election... the result was a landslide victory for the Tories. The National Party continued in power, still lead by MacDonald, whose efforts - put into restoring national confidence in the government and nation, came to naught... The Liberals withdrew support. The Government started to inject some effort into rearmament which caused a split in the Government ranks. The Party was prepared to provide greater rearmament but only if they had support from the League of Nations. The crisis came over sanctions against Mussolini for invading Abyssinia. Lansbury resigned and Attlee elected Leader of the Labour Party, took his place.

UNEMPLOYMENT

At the start of this period, just before 1930, the country's unemployment figures rose to one and a quarter million. This figure gradually increased adding a further million; a year later, the figure rose to almost a million a year after that. 1933 was unemployment's peak, when there were four men for every three jobs. Forty per cent of the unemployed were to be found in coal-mining, iron and steel, shipbuilding, and textiles. After that peak, there was a decline until the 1930. From there, the figures climbed back - to those of the peak, six years later. All these industries were mainly found in the North, Wales and Scotland. The South of England and in the southeast - particularly southern city and town suburbs, the population fared considerably better. Chamberlain forced down interest rates which kicked off the house-building boom. Great Britain started to emerge from the Great Depression...

The budget of 1931 instituted a new round of cuts in public spending and wages, including the pay of the Navy. There was a Naval Mutiny, which created renewed pressure on the pound. The Government abandoned the gold standard. That had an

immediate effect of easing pressure – it was a practical decision - allowing exports to compete with prices abroad – that lead the way to an eventual recovery... Gradually employment picked up. Britain was again competitive.

UNAFFECTED AREAS

It is clear that some parts of the country and some sections of society were not unduly affected. For instance, Middlesex, and particularly Harrow, felt little from the effects of the depression. The construction of new towns, house building and the production of necessary materials and components... stimulated by the low interest rates. The production of furniture, soft furnishings, kitchen and household equipment continued to flourish. There was a demand for new electrical gadgets and communication equipment. The production of cars and lorries reached an all time high as did the need for the latest farming equipment. The Government nationalized London Transport creating the London Passenger Transport Board to control buses and trains. This was not the only measure to influence the upturn; the Government started the Marketing Boards which guaranteed farm prices. Later that year, MacDonalld resigned, replaced by Baldwin. The governments of both Baldwin [1935-7 and Chamberlain [1937 - 40] were in reality conservative administrations. It is recorded, in a number of books, that the early period [1931-1935] was in fact a coalition. There were many, from all parties, who did not want such an alliance. It was the party leaders who formed a National Government, for this is what it was.

The technical advances in transport and communication continued to be advanced by consumer demand and factory mass production methods... These mechanical innovations were slowly adopted by the armed services which tried to keep pace

with the call for expansion. This rise in demand was slow to start with, but continued throughout the period, pushing forward with increasing urgency.

POPULATION EXPLOSION

The 1921 – 1931 censuses show a population increase of eleven per cent for Greater London. Beyond London in the outer northwest suburbs the increase was even greater – in Harrow it was fifty per cent. It was estimated that during 1919 – 1928 twelve thousand homes had been built within half a mile of the railway track, and that a further seventeen thousand was planned.

In 1929 a large housing development was started in Rayners Lane called Harrow Garden Village. The development included all the services, population amenities, re-built railway station and Odeon, art-deco cinema. All the property developed during 1929 – 1936 was substantial, using good materials, not scrimping with meagre wood mouldings and sub-standard doors. The designs are still good today, giving space and amenity to a family of five. The lower middle-class were increasingly to be found in the cities and towns suburbs, during the summer months, clipping hedge, mowing the grass verge, reading the newspaper over a cup of tea and perambulating in the park - listen to the band or watch cricket. In the winter, the population listened to the Light Programme, read Coward, Sayers, Christie, Johns and Blyton.

My mother left the Small & Tidmas lace mill in South Chard, to work for Mrs Roper the owner of Forde Abbey – as a Lady's Maid. In her first year, my mother and the Ropers' travelled to London – which was an annual event. During the time spent in London, Mrs Roper attended the Kensington Masonic Lodge, Ladies-Night Dinner. Mrs Roper, an honoured guest, was accompanied, as companion, by my mother.

As a Masonic Lodge official my father and other Lodge senior members, [this included their guests] sat at the top table. During the evening my father invited my mother to dance... Within the year my father and mother were married at Tatworth Church, my mother's home village. The wedding breakfast was celebrated at my mother's home Rosalie Cottage. My father's adopted brother Edward attended as his Best Man.

My parents went to live in a rented house in Sudbury, a suburb of Wembley, not far away from Harrow-on-the-Hill. A year later my brother was born. Contemplating an increase in the family, and needing a larger garden they moved to North Harrow in 1935, the same year I was born. The house had only just been built, they being the first occupants. It was the same year King George V and Queen Mary celebrated their Silver Jubilee.

My father's philosophy of property ownership was clear; he believed that given the choice he would prefer to rent than to buy. Now, it was never made clear to us children why he thought that. He obviously saw no merit in passing property on to his children, or using property as insurance – as a means of retirement collateral. Perhaps his experience of the horrors of The First World War convinced him that life was too transient – that it was best to live for the moment. Whatever, the reason he was wrong and what happened to him and to my mother is proof that his thinking was in error – they both lived long enough to regret not being independent.

The Garden Suburb of North Harrow was grandly advertised as 'The suburb in the country', and was fast filling up. By the time my parents occupied number thirty-one Cumberland Road, the town had been completed. The Kearey family had a new house in a new town... in which to celebrate their union.

It became a happy home for me, a town that I spent over forty years in - having my own family, enjoying all the things that

had first tempted my father to move there. I went to Infant and Junior school - at Longfield; became a chorister at St Albans, earned my pocket money as a 'paper-boy', and sang carols with my friend David Villers outside every house. I knew every street-corner and every overhanging apple tree. My children went to the same school, attended the same church and played in the same parks. As I grew up to reach my twenties I wanted to build my own life... that included getting married and having children. The plan was to provide for them the things I had missed whilst retaining the stability my parents enjoyed. North Harrow seemed the ideal place to start from, and because of those positive aspects, the place assumes great importance.

CHAPTER II

THE TOWN

SOCIAL CLASSES:- Railways - Metropolitan Line - Public Transport - Buses - Harrow - Outer London Suburb - Road Network - Satellite Towns - North Harrow - Pinner - Rayners Lane - Housing Developments - Outer Garden Suburbs - A place for the lower middle classes.

It would not be true to believe that it was only the workers who suffered greatest from the terrible waste of human life during the war. To encourage men to enlist the war department set up enlistment offices in each town and major industry calling for all fit men. This naturally meant that the men making up a battalion knew each other, went to school together, danced with the same girls, married within the circle, and were of the same

social network. In many of the battles some Battalions lost over half their men. They were replaced early on by other men from the same holding Battalions back home. Once again when in battle more men were lost. This meant that in certain towns and sections of society whole swathes of men were missing.

When the troops went 'over the top', they were lead by mainly junior officers. These junior officers were also from the same catchments areas supplying the enlisted men. Again in battle some Battalions lost all their junior officers. These men were in the main from the upper middle classes – from the landed gentry.

After the war, many of the families owning large estates holding positions of responsibility – likely to be future heads of the family, were dead. In many cases their younger brothers were dead too. In time their parents were too old and impoverished to retain and manage the family home, business and estate. These were broken up and sold to maintain their only home which ultimately became too much and sold. In this way the countryside lost the traditional squire in his manor house and the once fine estate sold, to be split up and sold piecemeal, some to be for building land. The countryside was never the same again. And this is what happened, starting gradually after the war, until the older, moneyed population, had died – by about 1938 – twenty-years after the war ended. The social classes lost a tier at the top... shortly it was to lose a tier at the bottom.

The First World War sounded the death knoll of the next generation of 'landed gentry', and to some extent, to the aristocrats as well. It speeded up what was likely to take place by natural evolution. Taxation in the form of death duties saw to it that over a period of time there would be a redistribution of wealth. The enclosure act forced some of the poor off the land. They gravitated, as did others, to the towns and factories. The agricultural depression at the end of the nineteenth century

changed the balance of the working population between town and country. The war hurried this change along. The 1919 budget raised death duties to forty per cent to estates over two million. A million acres of land was sold over that year. By the end of 1921 a quarter of England had changed hands... A quarter of agricultural land had passed from being tenanted into that of the farmer-owner. Land sales had reached their peak - three years of land sales, now the new owners totted up what their purchases had given them... The repeal of the Corn Production Act saw massive grain imports from Canada, America and Russia. The price of cereals plummeted. What large estates had survived started again to be split up and houses attached to them sold to become detached dwellings. A quarter of country houses were torn down or left derelict. By the first years of the Second World War there was less arable land. What land there was, was not being farmed properly. It took the war and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to take Britain close to self sufficiency.

The result of all this was, a large reduction of wealth owned by the top one per cent of the population – mainly the landed gentry. This land found its way to the next social layer down. Seventy-five per cent of Britain's population still held less than one hundred pounds in their estate. The change in the population's occupations – from country to town – from working the land to working the production line, gave an opportunity for skills to be learned and entrepreneurship to blossom. This flattened-out the social class graph, and reduced the layers.

Within this now reduced, or flattened out, layer of wealth is accorded a class position defined by occupation, background, education, speech, fashion and hobby – giving social structure.

For those who are interested in class and where they fit into the structure the concept is of interest... for it is a perceived thing. You may like to think of yourself as belonging to one class

but you neighbours may not agree with you. In the period and setting we are discussing, 1929 – 1939, in suburban Harrow, class was not of over-riding concern. There were no aristocrats, gentry or Gentlemen – rich men, without occupation. It was a working environment – of mainly men, travelling to and from their work, mostly by rail. There were very few cars and the local bus routes took prospective rail passengers to access a different rail network. It was not an area of heavy industry, textiles, mining or farming, but one of light engineering, service industries, office, and shop work.

North Harrow did not have any grand houses... Its premier houses lined the Pinner Road leading to Harrow. They had an extra living room and bedroom above, were detached, and designed in a similar style to all the rest of the town. If North Harrow had no houses for the very rich it neither had houses for the very poor... the town was made up of similar houses. Some streets had a better place upon the map – close to the park. Others had trees that lined the road. Those that backed upon the railway, positioned next to the shops, or linked to the council houses, had a disadvantage. But in the main, all were very much like each other... held a suburban likeness... there was very little to separate each individual family.

RAILWAYS

The first railway to be opened locally was The London & Birmingham Railway, later to be called the London & North Western, in 1837. It ran from Euston to Boxmore passing through Harrow, later to be called Harrow & Wealdstone station.

A second line, the Metropolitan, originally ran from Paddington to Farringdon, operating in 1863, as the first underground railway. Over the next twenty years was extended linking up with the District Railway and the Inner Circle in 1884.

During this time, branch lines ran from Baker Street to Swiss Cottage in 1868, and Willesden to Harrow in 1880. This was extended to Pinner five years later, a station being built there within the year. It took a further twelve years to push the tacking to Chesham, Chalfont, Watford, Amersham and Aylesbury. By the turn of the century the company stretched over fifty miles from central London – out to Buckinghamshire. The whole railway was electrified by 1905, and by 1927 North Harrow station was up and running. The electric Metropolitan District line, inaugurated 1904 operated between Park Royal and Roxeth - which included a halt at Rayners Lane. The company was not slow in planning the purchase of additional land for more lines, sidings and depots. This land was negotiated on the principle that the land could be used for other purposes. In the event it was used for housing instead. The first housing estates were built at Wembley and Pinner in the early 1900s. A few years later more land was let go all along the line which was only bought to a halt by The First World War.

However, the start of the war did not stop the railway company's publicity department continuing to operate - before its operations temporarily closed down. Its declared policy aim was to publicise the line. It had adopted the brand name of Metro-Land to title an advertising brochure aimed at promoting the company's land for development. This was not a one-off publication... for it continued publication for another twelve years - until the Metropolitan Railway ceased trading as an independent company, before becoming part of London Transport.

METROPOLITAN LINE

In January 1919, a property company called The Metropolitan Railway Country Estates Limited [MRCE] was set

up to manage and develop the railway's holdings. It was this company's policy to plan and built residential estates all along the line, including Pinner, North Harrow, Rayners Lane, Northwick Park and Eastcote. The scale of the enterprise required the services of local property developers who were allowed to build to their own specifications. To advertise the housing projects all the railway's route maps, timetables and station posters carried detailed accounts of the sites, plans and local facilities. This was done under the slogan 'a better way of life', and, 'rural traditions with civilized progress'. This marketing ploy worked and the houses were soon snapped up not just for owner occupation but by investors renting out property.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: BUSES

Tramways were laid at the end of the nineteenth century – they were company owned horse tramways. By 1897 electric tramways were operated, a number of tramway companies formed the Tramways and Light Railway Association. It wasn't long before the Omnibus Owners Association was formed to look after the interests of the horse drawn public transport. In the 1920s and 1930s the three forms of public transport – buses, trolleybuses and trains operated in and around London. The Road Traffic Act 1930 regulated road transport.

There were two bus routes which served North Harrow. The 183 ran from Golders Green Bus Station to either Pinner or Northwood Terminus..., and the 230, which covered Wealdstone Bus Station to Rayners Lane Terminus. In 1930. Both routes operated single Decker buses with a driver and conductor. Tickets were obtained from a ticket stick by the conductor, punched when the passenger first boarded the bus... these had to be shown to any Inspector when demanded. During rush hours both routes operated a ten minute service using regular stopping

places and request stops. Passengers could stop the bus at request stops by operating a bell. Orderly queues formed beside each bus and request stop.

HARROW, OUTER LONDON SUBURBS

North Harrow did not appear on the map by chance. It was ordained by the government of the day and the local authority planning department... to cater for the increase in population, and expanding businesses in and around the capital city. The problems of mass unemployment and the need to stimulate the economy lead the government to press local councils for the need to produce residential schemes for house building, and instigate ancillary projects to service that increase in population. The Government Acts of 1919 – 1925 ordered ten council-house estates to be built. Amongst these was one of fifty-three houses to be erected in North Harrow.

Roads can easily be laid, then, linked to existing ones. Railways require land owners, and affected local authorities, to sell and grant planning permission to travel beyond the proposed building site – to link up with an existing road system.

ROAD NETWORK

The need for workers houses close to their work, the location of the country's capital city London on a main river, with warehouses and dockland facilities, turned the southeast of England into Britain's most populous place. People and goods need to be moved from home to work, from factory to warehouse. Rivers, canals, roads, and railways are essential for moving troops, supplying goods, communication and personal travel. The direction of city developments happened along its lines of communication, both the roads and railways. As the city

expanded farmland was built over. In 1929 the most desirable land left close to London of easy access to a railway was in Middlesex and Hertfordshire. The suburban sprawl of settlements along the railways came to Harrow, North Harrow and Pinner following the main Harrow and Pinner Road in the early thirties. It was not a geographical feature that suggested a settlement but an existing railway network.

Before The First World War most people and goods travelled by the power of the horse. After the war the use of steam and then petrol - to power motors accelerated - the development of paved highways and improvements in road construction continued apace. The unemployed were given relief work which further accelerated what had begun. This government sponsored unemployment relief pushed forward road construction. More vehicles were manufactured giving a stimulus to proposals for arterial routes and side roads.

Under the Local Government Act 1929 County Councils became responsible for County Highways in their areas. They in turn proposed the building of town and city bypass to ease congestion. As the new garden towns were built in Metro-Land so the road layouts progressed to cover all the open fields.

It wasn't many years after the town was started that the Ministry of Transport directed the introduction of road markings, road signs and pedestrian crossings. By 1934 the Road Traffic Act placed a speed limit of thirty miles per hour for all town and city roads throughout Britain.

The outbreak of War in 1939 brought an end to the expansion of trunk road construction but towards the end of the War the Ministry favoured the provision of a network of high standard routes. Post War saw the enactment of the 1946 Trunk Road Act.

NORTH HARROW, PINNER & RAYNERS LANE

North Harrow lies between Harrow and Pinner, on the Metropolitan Railway - which runs on an east to west bearing. Harrow, a main railway junction - services three railway companies. Pinner, in the north-eastern corner of Harrow parish, was a large medieval hamlet in 1750... enlarged to village status a hundred years later... then town, by the turn of the century. Pinner Town had an existing railway station built at the sometime the track was laid. Both these towns are situated on the A404, Pinner Road.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

The development of farmland started in the 1920s and 30s. The electrification of the London & North Western Railway in 1917, and permission given for the Piccadilly Line to run over the Metropolitan District line in 1932 gave access to most of that land. By 1933 there were twenty-one stations including North Harrow available for commuters. Baker Street station was the company's headquarters incorporating the largest and most luxurious apartment block in London – completed in 1929.

Land speculation and property development operated over the whole area continuously from 1925 till 1939. By 1926 the road layout was mapped out and road building started, provisions made for main services included, and by 1939 the network was complete. In 1933 Harrow Urban District Council produced residential schemes for house building using the existing main access roads of Harrow Road and Pinner Road to accommodate Alexandra Avenue, Imperial Drive, and George V Avenue. Side roads lead off main thoroughfares, giving today's existing road layout.

On a north south axis, North Harrow lies between Wealdstone – to the north, and, Rayners Lane, to the south - on

the A4090, situated on the crossroads of two main arterial roads. The local authorities appreciated the need to build a new town with all its attendant services at this place.

Private house building flourished in the 1920s and 30s. By 1932 building was continuous alongside the railway, referred to a ribbon development, and main roads – from Harrow to Pinner, Wealdstone to Rayners Lane. Most of the countryside between Pinner and Roxeth was built during the 30s. By 1938 North Harrow was complete in all respects.

HOUSE OWNERSHIP

It is difficult now to explain the average workers feelings and opinions regarding house ownership prior to The First World War and shortly afterwards. Only a very small percentage of the population owned their own house. This ten per-cent of owner-occupiers bought because they had the money to do so without needing a loan. Many aristocrats, landed gentry and upper classes rented either their own home or a second home in the country – it was the done thing. There was no shame in not owning your own home, the rent was low and you had the benefit of being able to move quickly as a job became available. As inflation was low and static there was no point in buying to hedge inflation, or to use as a long-term investment. To a degree this attitude was accepted as ‘normal’ and not questioned. There was a certain amount of ‘what’s the point of owning a house and having to maintain it – then, having to pass it on – why should I save for another generation?’ With a growing family you could move to increase the number of bedrooms without over extending your income. Then, where the children left, you could rent something smaller as your income became smaller in retirement. At least ten per-cent of the population lived in tied accommodation – policeman, firemen, estate workers, mill

workers, railway workers, servants, miners, land workers, the armed services and teachers – the house went with the job. In the twenties, houses held about one-quarter of the country's annual fixed-capital security. Ten years later the amount was one-third.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

During this period over three million homes were built. The architectural style of the period was Arts and Crafts – a style of decoration with a romantic return to previous ages using solid wood panelling, and Georgian windows; Mock Tudor, aping the Tudor period with sham wooden framing and leaded lights, and Cottage Style, long- sloping tiled roofs and divided windows. The lower outer walls were built of red brick, above, pebbledash with half-timbering. Red clay tile roofs and tile hung bays. Georgian small windows set in metal casements with wooden frames and cills. Previous craftsmanship gave way to machine made products. Furniture used white wood and ply stained to resemble polished walnut. Carpet squares surrounded by lino. Parquet hall floors and decorated stair spindles. All treated with dark oak stain. Quarry tile kitchen floors, butler sinks, fire-back water boilers and gas cookers. Open fires in all living rooms with wood mantle above tile surrounds. Bedrooms had iron fire grates and fitted wardrobes. Sash windows, landing lights, front door lights and side windows leaded with stained glass.

Between large scale building sites of semi-detached houses, Bungalows, Modern and Art Deco Styles existed, dividing the more conventional style with their flat roofs, ziz-zag and fan window patterns, painted concrete bays and sun-trap curved windows. The construction sites were organized for multiple building techniques on a grand scale that gave a quick turn round of work completing large sites in a four year period – mostly all before 1936.

CUTLER HOMES

The majority houses built in North Harrow were Cutler homes. Albert Benjamin Cutler came from Tottenham. He began building in 1909 but most of his work was in North Harrow and Pinner during the early thirties. His son Horace took over becoming Mayor of Harrow, then Leader of the Greater London Council finally knighted in 1979. Albert Cutler lived in Beresford Road, Marsh Road and lastly in Eastcote Road. He was closely associated with the Imperial Properties Investment Company then Amalgamated London Properties. During the period, 1925-1939 T F Nash Ltd., had three large estates for developing. One was at Eastcote where he lived, another at Kenton and a third at Rayners Lane... they the most economical... then on the way to Pinner that ranged from £595 to £750 – four up and two down, with a garage.

LIGHT INDUSTRY

Depending on the industry, production started to push ahead in the early thirties. The first factories to set the wheels in motion were the new electric consumer goods – cookers, refrigerators, irons, toasters and vacuum cleaners. Radios, telephone equipment and cameras also felt greater sales being recorded. All these items needed ancillary parts to be manufactured. Indeed this was not ‘heavy industry’ but it had to start somewhere. Steel output rose from a low five million tons in 1932, to thirteen by 1937. Coal production had stabilized and productivity started to rise at a steady pace to reach its old peak by 1938. It was a marked change in textiles. Cotton never succeeded in reaching its previous high but woollens did. Generally the thirties, in comparison to other European

countries, are described as being an improvement on the previous era – in the twenties.

CHAPTER III

THE SERVICES

LOCAL WATER COMPANY: - Gas Supplier – Electricity Company – Cooking – Water Heating – Coal Delivery - Lighting – Living -Standards – Wage Levels – Public Health – Public Toilets - Water Fountains - Waste Collection - The Welfare State – Church and State.

When the local council were asked to submit schemes for land development in the late 1800s they considered the supply of water. These concerns were passed onto the Coln Valley Water Company who undertook to supply the necessary piped water as early as 1884. Ten years later the then local authority had installed a new sewage system. The house building schemes thirty years later gratefully used these provisions, altering the gauge and pipe material whilst retaining the essential main service.

As the dwellings were being designed and built provision had to be made for recreation and open spaces to give health and a green environment for its inhabitants. This was first investigated at the time of The Great Exhibition. By 1910, a Local Board of Health committee of the Harrow Urban District Council gave consideration for recreation grounds for Harrow and Roxeth. By 1925 Headstone Park was acquired, then Pinner Park in 1930. In 1938 Harrow reserved 962 acres for a green belt. The 1894 Harrow sewage farms were turned into Kenton's recreation ground after a larger site found. West Harrow Park

and Streamside Walk joined the others as the building estates grew.

Property speculators and house buyers could obtain a mortgage with an interest rate of 4.25 per cent. These Building Societies did not require large deposits. Abbey National, then called Abbey Road, registered a seven-hundred per cent increase in borrowers, in the ten years, 1926 – 1936. This allowed most of the lower middle class and better off working class the opportunity to buy. The interest rate was set at this low point to stimulate the market, which is what it did. The population of Harrow Weald raised from fifteen hundred to eleven thousand and that of Pinner three thousand to twenty-three. North Harrow was, prior to 1919, undeveloped. Twenty years later all the farmland was gone – the one-time farmland built over.

GAS SUPPLIER

Due north of Harrow, lies the village of Stanmore. The gas-works were opened there in 1859, supplying Harrow through a private contractor named John Chapman - whose business was called Stanmore Gas Company. In 1894, it was joined with Harrow District Gas Company – the two becoming Harrow and Stanmore Gas Company, the gas holders were sited at South Harrow. This company was later taken over by Brentford Gas Company in 1924 - formed part of the Gas Light and Coke Company - two years later.

ELECTRICITY COMPANY

This growth coming from these new enterprises entailed electricity, in one form or another. The development of the electricity supply was the most important industrial event of that period. Legislation was required to carry forward a bill that

became the Electricity Supply Act of 1925. This created the Central Electricity Board formed at the time of the General Strike – in 1926. The Board's task was to rationalize the myriad local power stations into larger units – to build a new generation of power stations, all connected to a national grid - of high-power transmission lines. By 1933 this goal was almost complete. It was a world-wide first - having the most advanced system of electrical supply available produced by coal fired power stations.

Prior to The First World War, the use of electricity was for the very few. In 1920 there being almost three-quarters of a million users rising to nine million by 1939. In 1927 one house in seventeen, using electricity... by 1930 one house in three rises to two out of three, by 1939.

It is difficult to imagine the difference having electricity made to the population, particularly to those living in the country. Before electricity, illumination was by gas, commonly used by the time of The Great Exhibition in 1851. Gradually, by the turn of the twentieth-century, in the country cottage, candle power gave way to oil, then oil to gas. It took until the nineteen thirties for all homes to be lit by electricity. At my grandmothers cottage in Somerset I went to bed, in the 1940s, by candle light, leaving the family below playing cards by the light of an oil lamp. The radio was powered by an accumulator and the milk was kept in the stream.

After all wars there is a surge of new inventions and discoveries... brought onto the market. The First World War was no different. In the nineteen-twenties electricity and gas appliance started to appear. Cookers, refrigerators, water heaters and all sorts of household gadgets including vacuum cleaners, radio sets, record players and toasters appeared first in advertising then in the shops.

COOKING, WATER HEATING & LIGHTING

Prior to The First World War cooking and water heating achieved on a kitchen range, with an open fire next to a bread oven. The fuel would have been wood and coal. Many outhouses were built or converted to kitchen use using paraffin. Similarly lighting was by candle and oil. Gas was being used extensively for street lighting. By the middle of the nineteenth century domestic lighting and heating was a matter of fact. However, this relied upon the nearness of the gas line and gas holder - for continuous pressure. When the Garden Suburbs were being planned and executed gas was laid on and customers could have a choice of which power to use – Coal, Gas or Electricity - for water and space heating, and cooking.

COAL DELIVERY

Most domestic water and space heating was by burning coal – welsh nuts and coke – burnt coal [high grade coal, or steam-coal, was the preserves of the industrial sector]. Delivery was by horse and cart from coal depots – normally at the local railway siding, the coal was carried in hundred-weight sacks, on the back of the coalman who deposited in your coal-bunker. Fires were started either by mentholated [soaked] fire lighters, gas-irons or kindling – chopped wood. If the coalman had spare coal he would call at each house to see if he could sell some. During this ten year period coal began to become scarce. The shortage of coal was the result of increased demand. Throughout the thirties, into the fifties, the production of coal continued to escalate, until oil fired power stations took up the strain. It was the Clean Air Act and over capacity that ultimately saw the demise of this once proud industry.

Domestic coal became low grade either slack – coal dust, or quantities of slate. Increasingly coal briquettes were made industrially, to supplement the coal that was rationed. Normally coal-sheds were filled during the summer to last the winter. Whatever the grade of coke, and there were at least two, coke needed a good draught - to make the fire ‘keep-in’ - a mixture of coke and coal was used. The coalman judged to a nicety how much bagged coal the horse could pull unloading as near to the coal depot as possible, early on his round. The coalman was a very important member of pre-war society his produce a very necessary item, particularly during winter. Carrington’s – the coal merchants my parent’s used, were the largest hauliers and distributors. [The Carrington’s, endowed the Fitzwilliam museum with their collection of prints, in 1936.]

The mass extraction of coal was a development of the mid-nineteenth century – eighty years before. The advent of the steam engine thirty years later made coal a more viable product – transportable. Fortunately the coal produced was high grade, very profitable. By the nineteen-thirties the miners were some of the highest paid workers in British industry. When manufacturing suffered a decline so too did the coal industry – there were too many mines producing too much coal. Closures were inevitable. The government compelled firms to participate in a marketing quota scheme to maintain price levels. The 1930 Coal Mines Act established price controls... the following year the government compelled coal-owners to use a central marketing agency. By 1938 the possibility of war, the rearmament programme and higher industrialisation prompted the government to insist upon amalgamations which ultimately lead to Nationalization, eight years later.

LIVING STANDARDS

The growth of the British economy kept pace with the population. There was a baby boom in the twenties which is not surprising. At the other end of the age scale the advances in medicines – sulpha drugs and penicillin, and the treatment of patients – experience gained from war casualties, raised life expectancy levels. This rise in the working population added over three and a quarter million to the workforce. This did not just improve production but also raised demand.

The increase in working population now includes a much larger share for women. Even though returning men from the war eased women out of jobs more associated with ‘men’s work’ the role of women would never return to those of pre-war. A far greater number of women were independent, earning their own living. Professions and occupations previously closed to women now received a number of applicants granted inclusion.

Reading certain history books - giving a social history of Britain, you might be lead to believe that by 1929 the mass of the population were leading a life different from that lived ten years before. It is not so. Some men had not worked continuously since returning home from the war. Others engaged one job at a time - competing for vacancies every morning. In the early thirties the newspapers were filled with stories of the nation’s economic troubles. There were millions unemployed and stories of unrest among the workers. There was real human suffering and the picture from the north of England was bad. The mills were silent, groups of idle workers on every street corner. Clogs were worn and echoed on the cobbles. Scores of children were undernourished. In many towns factories were being torn down for the bricks to be sold on as seconds.

WAGE LEVELS

1931 saw the faint glimmer of hope. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain, was a skilled financier; he had already made a name for himself for being an excellent administrator when Minister of Health, now he was to show his skill attending to the nation's money. His plan was to save by introducing cuts in wages and salary of all people not just the lower paid. In a series of stringent budgets he presided over a policy of protectionism, great saving were made by converting two thousand million pounds of the five per cent War Loan to three and a half. By this time the schemes for house building had begun and more of the money saved went on rearming the nation. In 1937 the fifteen to sixty-four age group represented nearly seventy per cent of the working population. This added three-quarters of a million to the workforce over a period of thirteen years. The increase, in birth rate, life expectancy, and the resultant consumer spending generated by both, increased national output. These five key decisions: protectionism, reduced wages, realigned interest rate, stimulated house building and rearmament saw the nation slowly begin its recovery - begin a ten year cycle of improvement. This programme was mainly directed towards the industrial sector of society. Light engineering, the new sources of power, and the service industries, were never as seriously affected by the depression.

PUBLIC HEALTH

The period 1929 – 1939, saw a general improvement in the public's standards of health. As well as a reduction in the death rate there was an improvement in a child's life expectancy - deaths dropping by ten per cent. The normal teenager's death rates, from scarlet fever, diphtheria, whooping cough and measles, improved greatly – doubling in twenty years. There was a steady improvement in adult height and weight. The 1937

Survey of the Social Structure of England and Wales considered that it was the improvement in housing, water provision, sanitation, hygiene and the advances in medical skill. This was common practice services engage in throughout England. All covered by the 1936 Public Health Act, extended later to include the Food and Drugs Act. Piped water was provided to my grandmother's cottage in Somerset in 1935.

The new housing estates, the local planning authorities concern for recreational space, the nations completed sewer system, improved, nutritional diets, and greater health provision - through local cottage hospitals, maternity units and nursing and auxiliary services, all contributed to improved standards in public health. In 1934, an act was passed empowering local authorities to make free or subsidized milk available to schoolchildren. This was distributed in third of a pint bottles by classroom monitors providing a straw for each child. Three years later over three million children had the opportunity to drink milk. By 1935, the year of my birth, there were two thousand three hundred doctors and five thousand three hundred nurses engaged in servicing the school's medical services. In 1936, local authorities had to provide trained midwives. By 1939, all schools in Harrow and District provided subsidized school meals, a percentage free for the needy.

The National Insurance Act 1912, applied to nearly twelve million workers... by 1921, fifteen million, and finally twenty million by 1938. The scheme provided a free doctor service. For families of insured workers - included most of the middle classes, reliance placed on private schemes and sick clubs. Other health services had to be paid for. Payment for a visit to the hospital in 1928 was a two tier arrangement split between local authorities and voluntary hospitals. Only the very poor had free treatment.

As can be imagined death rates occurred higher in poor areas of the country. Harrow was considered to be the best place to receive medical treatment and your chances of survival from treatment far greater. In 1930 the BMA suggested a system of health insurance for practically all adults and their dependants. This would include dentists, maternity and ophthalmology. It took over fifteen years for the National Health Service to be fully operational – after The Second World War.

PUBLIC TOILETS

All towns were provided with public lavatories, some more elaborate than others. North Harrow's was a brick built and tiled roofed building - in an architectural style in keeping with all the local buildings. It was sited next to the services road bordering Cooper's Hardware Store and Maynard's Sweet Shop. It boasted a permanent staff of an aged couple who were most particular how their toilets were turned out. The brass work shone and the tiled floor sparkled.

DRINKING FOUNTAINS & CATTLE TROUGHS

The Association for the provision of Drinking Fountains and Horse Troughs had its beginnings in 1847 when the Liverpool local government bought out the private water companies. Their object was to construct public baths and stimulate interested parties to built drinking fountains. Twelve years later Samuel Gurney, a London MP, started an association with the aim of building drinking fountains to provide pure cold water... the first to be built on Holborn Hill on 21st April 1859.

With the collaboration of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals drinking fountains for both

humans and animals acclaimed as necessary public amenities... linking up with the evangelical movement gave the movement a strong link with the church. It became so popular that thousands of water troughs were installed on city and town streets. Henceforth, it became obligatory for local councils to provide space in all new town development. North Harrow had two, one on Station Road the other on Pinner Road, close to the town's main cross-roads. By 1936, the association stopped building new troughs, as cars and trucks took over from the horse. However, more fountains were built at schools and parks... the metal cups chained to the bowls gave way to a small jet, for the sake of hygiene. West Harrow Park, Headstone Park and Pinner Park all were provided with a fountain, the most elaborate sited at West Harrow the oldest park of the three. The standard 1929 design can be seen at each in addition to the more elaborate commemorative fountains.

WASTE COLLECTION

The dust cart came round once a week – on a Wednesday. The lorry was painted green and the collection was tipped into domed compartments covered by bowed sliding doors. Anything which could not be placed in the back of the cart was put on the roof. Every house had its own metal bin. I do not remember any complaint about having too much rubbish or throwing away an awkward shape or extra heavy item. Everything was taken away without question by the dustmen.

The Road Sweeper pushed his metal sided cart to his allotted station there he took from the rack his broad headed broom to sweep the pavements pushing the rubbish into the gutters. When he had finished the pavement he swept the rubbish into neat piles in the gutter to be later shovelled up and placed in his cart. At the end of his day he pushed the cart to a collection

place behind the shops where the council dust cart carried the waste to the dump. All the pavements and roads were similarly treated there was never any rubbish left lying about.

THE WELFARE STATE

As unemployment rose, after The General Strike, into the thirties, a series of Government Acts were passed to provide extra levels of benefit. It was soon transparent that there were gaps in the payments, benefits and contributions. Many of the poor still had to apply to the Poor Law, and after 1929, to the Public Assistance Committees, of the local authorities. The government soon recognised the gaps - especially the exceptional diversity of employment. The Unemployment Assistance Board Acts of 1934/5 still didn't seal the gaps and a further series of acts were needed. It took until 1937 for the majority of the unemployed that received assistance under the Public Assistance Committees of the local authority transferred to the Unemployment Assistance Board.

By the early 20s the Family Endowment Society was advising a national family allowance system, providing 12s. 6d. per week for mothers, 5s. 0d. for the first child and 3s. 6d. for each subsequent child. This suggestion never got off the ground it was considered by the government that this would destroy work incentives and reduce the mobility of labour. In 1931/2 Chamberlain took the issue out of the local authority hands and set up the Unemployment Assistance Board in 1934. It took until 1939/40 when the government give way but not for the original social reasons but to suppress wage claims, labour disputes, and therefore, to control inflation. But the wedge was in...! The Beveridge Report 1942, made family allowance a cornerstone of social insurance.

CHURCH AND STATE

It is perfectly understandable to find, in census figures, that congregations shrunk after each war, and did so throughout the passing centuries. The First World War had a profound affect on a society staggering from the unsettling results of a shifting population, buffeted, and confused, by industrialization. These uncertainties took their toll. Increasingly, in the twenties, Nonconformist, made inroads upon the established church. It was not because they required less commitment, but less ridged, and prescribed behaviour. Their services: complimented by, song, colourful-tracts, and religious-leaflets, drew-in their congregations - giving them a sense of belonging.

Although the graph for York shows that Anglican attendees continued to dominate until after the Second World War, the Nonconformist were waiting to take up the reins soon after that. The figures for Catholicism, on the other hand, show a steady rise throughout the whole period. This is born out by what was happening in North Harrow.

Between the wars the attendance figures for Baptists, Wesleyan, Methodists, United Free Church and Congregationalists showed little change. Their attendance figures, reflected the strength of the connection to the youth association, adopted by the church or chapel - a strong Boys Brigade Company saw a strong congregation. Similarly, Scout Group, or Church Lads movement. For well established churches, and chapels, that catered for the full range of young people, the attendances were higher still. As with all institutions, if they are run by a team of dedicated officers over a long period, and if the takeover after they retire is sound, church attendance figures stayed consistent...

Although church attendances steadily declined, from the early, strict Victorian period, throughout all social classes, society

continued to adhere to the churches principles and teachings. From the end of the thirties, into war years and beyond those principles and teachings has been undermined, disregarded, and in some cases, abandoned. Nevertheless, the values influencing the new culture were Christian.

CHAPTER IV

THE FACILITIES

THE TOWN'S SCHOOLS:- Public – Grammar – Secondary Modern - Car Production – Public Entertainment – Parks and Gardens - The Cinema – Theatre – Radio Broadcasting – The Shops – Public Telephones - Shopping – The Nation's Food – Meals – Laundry – Wives and Mothers – Society Changes.

The vast majority of children attended State Secondary Schools working towards an in-school – set, marked, and invigilated, exam. I do not think that those children at the bottom of their year looked up to those above, nor do I believe that those in the highest streams looked down on those below. As far as I can remember it was a conveyor belt of things you had to do... you stepped on at twelve and alighted three years later. Not one of us displayed any fear for the future or suffered from sleep disturb nightmares. The future – leaving school for work, was another step on the path to adulthood. There was an abundance of jobs. What one ended up doing was as much to do with your father's job, as to the result of year's report.

A number of boys quickly and quietly went from Secondary School to Polytechnic, Trade School or Technical College. They had worked out what they wanted to do. Others went to a prearranged apprenticeship. It wasn't a question of this job, or that line, or this was paid better. It was up to fate, and a little luck. And, any rate, there were girls to think about – that was enough to worry about!

The Labour Party adopted the principle of secondary education for all, irrespective of the income, class, or occupation of their parents; that children maybe transferred at the age of eleven plus, from primary to one or other of the secondary schools, and remain there until sixteen. This principle was a cornerstone in the Hadow Report in 1923, and came into being in 1926. The two types of secondary school were, Secondary Modern Schools and Grammar. The children attending secondary modern schools were to leave at the age of fifteen. The Hadow Report was accepted but the implementation delayed by the poor state of the country's economy. The majority of children by 1938 were operating within the reorganized secondary modern system. Some fee-paying school from the private sector qualified for 'direct grants' for taking on a number of scholarship boys.

My primary school was Longfield. The class sizes in 1938/9 were between twenty-five to thirty children. The first class was The Introduction Class, a further three classes held a years difference between each. Similarly upstairs, the Junior School operated the same class structure – years 8/9, 9/10, 10/11. The school had been built at the same time as the rest of the town displaying the then modern style – brick walls, metal framed windows and a flat roof. All the furniture and equipment was new.

The New Secondary Education system followed the then pattern voiced in the thirties – that there should be different

schools for different abilities, and the children tested to decide which school system at the age of eleven.

It is impossible to write about England's class structure without some reference to education. It is what is taught, how it is taught and why, that defines for the recipient where they fit in the social structure. Children are carriers of the parents assumed place in society. When educated they carry also the school's aims and objectives which includes aspired place for their charges. This overlays their parents opinions, lies in sympathy with it, or, gives them their own place. It is highly likely that these opinions, shaped by heredity, environment, and education, are confused, easily changed, depending on circumstance. Class is a subject which will always have to be defined, and the answer will always include: the school, place in year, class, what university, which course, who taught it and with what result. As today's thinking suggests education is a continuous – ongoing, event... social class, for the individual, in the centre layer, is beyond defining... and quite rightly too!

CAR PRODUCTION

In 1929 William Morris of Oxford was dominating the car production industry. He alone, out of fifty-eight companies, was way out in front, producing a series of models to take British car production ahead of France, to become Europe's largest car producer. In 1937 Britain provided fifteen per cent of the worlds vehicle exports – a record level of production. By 1938 Morris Motors included MG, Wolseley, and Riley In 1939 Morris Motors produced twenty-seven per cent of the car market - the largest share. By 1924 Britain was producing 146,000 units; thirteen years later the figure was over three times that number. The years at Britain's lowest production level – in the middle of the depression Britain produced more cars than in any previous year.

By the end of our period there were nearly 400,000 employed in motor manufacture. In 1935/6 a popular model could be bought for half the cost of one produced ten years before.

The motor vehicle industry was closely linked to aircraft production, motor cycling, push bikes, electrical engineering and kitchen equipment. The whole industry was sixty per cent higher in 1937, than the figures for 1924. From the early thirties rearmament boosted up production in electrical and mechanical engineering – particularly those industries closely linked to military vehicles and aircraft.

The chemical industry developed many new materials from oil: Plastic, rayon, synthetic dyes, fertilizers, animal food and gas. The industry employed 100,000 by 1939, catching up fast on engineering. Once again, rearmament served the chemical industry well creating many new materials and uses.

PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT: THE CINEMA

The largest influence to change society forever was the cinema. The life-styles, values, language and music of American film producers exerted pressure, which, through a weekly injection, altered mainly working class morals, behaviour, speech and expectations. Many of Britain's best actors and comedians followed the trail to America when jobs were hard to find here. To stimulate British films production the Cinematograph Films Act of 1927 was introduced. A wave of lavish productions by Alexander Korda, through London Films, tried to wrestle work away from America. It failed, not having the production cost effective. A spate of cheap 'quickies' also failed to satisfy quota requirements. Eventually the Act was modified in 1938, and again later, evened out production schedules and quotas.

Another film company in 1928, built upon the Neptune Film Company, became established as the Ideal Film Company,

owned by Ludwig Blattner. The Blattner Studio was leased to Joe Rock Productions who bought the company, the whole eventually becoming British National Films Limited. Gainsborough Film Company was also operating at the same time producing comedy films with Will Hay.

Associated British Cinemas, established in 1927, merged a number of Scottish cinema circuits... becoming British International Pictures, later absorbed into Elstree Studio complex – Graham/Wilcox company. This merged with British National Studios. During the 1930s grew to become ABPC. The owner John Maxwell died in 1940 his widow sold out to Warner Brothers.

In America Warner Brothers developed the Vitaphone, sound on disc system, producing *The Jazz Singer*. This was the start to Hollywood musicals. MGM won the first Oscar for the musical *Broadway Melody* in 1929, following the Wall Street crash. Busby Berkeley reshaped the musical stage with his clever editing and unusual camera angles. The first animated musical was Walt Disney's *Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs*. Quickly followed by MGMs *'The Wizard of Oz'* in 1939. The thirties was a period stage stars turned to the film studio for work including Fred and Adele Astaire, Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald.

It was in the 1930s that a series of British film comedies lifted the British cinemas audiences. The works of Will Hay, Old Mother Riley, George Formby and Max Miller drew in the crowds.

Rank's venture into film making began when he was a Sunday school teacher. He punctuated his teaching with showing religious films to his own class and to other schools. Eventually he made his own and the distributed them. The Methodist Society complained that about the negative influence American

films were having on young people. Rank took up the challenge to make his own 'family friendly' films.

Within British National Films Company J Arthur Rank created Pinewood Film Studios. He found that after making *Turn of the Tide* he could not get it screened – the American movie industry denied access. Rank solved the problem by buying a large part of both the distribution and exhibition systems – formed a partnership with C M Woolf to create General Cinema Finance Corporation. He then used that company to buy out General Film Distributors, the UK arm of Universal Pictures.

By 1937 Rank consolidated his film making business in both Pinewood and Denham Film Studios, within a new company called the Rank Organisation. The following year he bought the Odeon cinema chain, and Amalgamated Studios in Elstree. The Rank Organisation then bought Gaumont–British Picture Corporation and Lime Grove Studios. The following year negotiated to buy Paramount cinema chain, in 1942.

By 1939 four million cinema seats gave daily access to the false, romantic, sham and colourful escapism of Hollywood... The first Technicolor film musical was *The Wizard of Oz* and from 1939 there was a string of fantastic musicals still produced on the stage today.

The country's citizens were entertained by other popular mediums: the radio, football and boxing. These sops to the daily grind of life, supplied relief replacing religion which never recovered from the tragedy and farce of *The First World War*. Churchgoers fell from twenty per cent to twelve, between 1910 and 1960 From the start of the thirties consumerism manifested considerable influence: there was more to buy, a more colourful society to copy, more money in the housewife's pockets and jobs were becoming available. Things were looking up...!

Harrow, as we know it today, was a merger of Harrow-on-the-Hill Urban District, and Wealdstone and Hendon Rural Districts in 1934. The town's chief claims to fame are its public school, church and hill, upon which both sit. Prior to the 1920s its population gathered around the hill unevenly spreading further out towards London.

Every town in the vicinity had its own cinema. Naturally the largest town required the largest cinema which more often than not the smartest. Harrow had its Granada cinema which boasted an organ – the only cinema that had one close at hand. In 1929 there were about four thousand cinemas in Britain. The Granada was, when built, considered to be one of the new super cinemas that could seat upto four thousand patrons.

THE THEATRE

The Harrow Coliseum, as with all large theatres of the day, was resplendent in gold paint and red velvet cloth. The carpets, thick and lush, and the seats, soft and springy. All covered in red velvet with gold headed nails. It represented 'High Victorian' design - mouldings and motifs, statues, niches and plaster corning.

The Coliseum was opened in 1940 in Station Road, Harrow, by Queen Mary. The auditorium, circle and boxes designed to seat two-thousand patrons in luxury. The theatre was closed fifteen years later, in 1955.

The original site was a 1922 cinema, founded by the owners of Hammer Films – whose doors opened to the public in 1923 to great acclaim.

PARKS AND GARDENS

The Local Authority Greenhouses and Nurseries were situated at West Harrow Park. It is important to explain that Parks, Gardens and Walks were under the authority that maintained and stocked their gardens, verges and beds. To be able to do this there was an organized nursery system large enough to cope with all their needs. It was on a grand scale overseen by the Head Gardener. His position was guaranteed by his previous experience... upheld by the gardeners below him - maintaining a high standard. All the Borough's flower beds were immaculate, every bit as good as those seen at large holiday resorts on the coast. A competition was held by all the parks as to who's the best each year. This prize was eagerly sought after and suitable notices and reports made in the local newspapers. The only way a gardener could apply for an advanced position, if he could show how well his gardens performed in competition.

West Harrow Park had a paddling pond that provided space for those keen enough to sail their model boats. The park held the local tennis courts and Bowling Green as well as providing a bandstand. The park was for perambulating not for children's games, running about or cycling. The grass was perfect and the flower beds a riot of perfectly formed colour and floral design.

Headstone Manor Park was home to Bessborough Cricket Ground, circled by stately elms. Pinner Park had a fountain, and Streamside Walk meandered beside the River Pinn, bridged over to allow movement along the further bank. All these local parks were perfections of horticultural splendour policed by park keepers who stopped children running, cycling or walking on the grass. They were places for peace and quiet providing seating for contemplation and rejuvenation.

RADIO BROADCASTING

In 1922 the British Broadcasting Company advertised for a General Manager. The company had been running for some time using six transmitters, the capital provided by six main producers of components; the BBC was the only source of broadcasting having gone on the air as 2LO on the 14th November 1922. Reith was asked to manage all the company's copyright and performing rights, the technical patents for wireless transmissions, create associations with artists, authors, playwrights, composers, music publishers, theatre managers and wireless manufacturers. It was a daunting prospect but one he felt he could manage.

In 1926 Reith believed that during the General Strike the company should invite all sides to give their side of the dispute. He attempted to arrange a broadcast by the leader of the opposition but was vetoed by the government. He again tried to mediate by inviting The Archbishop of Canterbury. It was not allowed to happen.

Prior to 1929, the British Broadcasting Company was owned by a number of wireless part manufacturers including British Thomson-Houston, General Electric, Marconi and Metropolitan-Vickers. The BBC became a corporation in 1927.

Reith's policy was to consider all views and if possible to broadcast those views so that the citizens of Britain could debate the issues. He insisted on high broadcasting standards, honesty and debate of all common interests. Reith resigned his post in 1938.

THE SHOPS

The shops in Harrow, North Harrow and Pinner represented most of the popular trading outlets of the time. Harrow had the largest department store in Sopers which was very similar to today's super stores, and Burtons, the fifty shilling Tailors. North Harrow had Home and Colonial and Liptons,

both grocers, which sold most provisions other than fruit and vegetables. There was United Dairies selling milk products and cakes, as did Express Dairies. Lists and Garners the bakeries. Coopers, the hardware store. Maynard's, making and selling sweets from tall jars. Woolworths, the 3d and 6d stores The Cooperative Stores, with their pneumatic checking system, part of a large chain that operated a half yearly dividend [divi?] payout system, and W H Smiths, the stationers, awash with diaries and calendars. Pinner had Sainsbury's which always suggested quality.

Many of the items at the grocers were sold loose... that had to be weighed and bagged. Other popular brands were displayed prominently using brand colours and designs. These were most fashionable and the stores major sales items. At the cheese counter the blocks of cheese were cut up and weighed as was bacon and ham. The backs of the counters – against the rear wall, lined with shelves and cupboards - displaying their wares. The counter displayer with: marble slab, knife block, weighing machine, coffee grinder, wrapping paper and string.

All these shops were most particular to have the very best hop fitters to furnish their counters and façades. Their house styles always the same, in whichever town they resided. Nothing was ever poorly made or shoddily equipped. They relied upon good service and politeness to ensure customers returned.

Mothers had no fear about leaving their prams outside. In fact the pavements would be littered with prams dotted about as their owners went from shop to shop.

Each main thoroughfare had a red public telephone box where for tuppence a call could be made to any location. The telephone had a direct line to the operator who took each call placing the asked for number by her dial-up system.

Each main road had a convenient blue police box that had a direct line into the police station. Normally the policemen on

his beat would call into the station to make regular reports. There was a special telephone at the side for the public to make emergency calls to the station operator.

Policemen could be seen at any time of the day or night on his beat checking all the doors and windows, the padlocks on the gates, standing in the shadows of a shop doorway ever vigilant being aware that the sergeant would be cycling past checking up on his whereabouts. The nearest Police

SHOPPING

Generally two mornings during the week were set aside for shopping – Tuesdays and Fridays, Wednesdays the shops were closed for half day opening. The Friday shop had to carry the housewife over the weekend. Very few husbands shopped for groceries, children's underwear and toiletries. They condescended to look after providing for the children's top clothes – in the main, school uniforms, purchased in Harrow.

The women provided themselves with either a basket of shopping bag – perhaps two for there was a lot to get in if the family was large. Many are the times my mother came in from the shopping trip with her hands showing the signs of a heavy bag and freezing cold – to be warmed in front of the fire.

Those mothers with a family with small children had the convenience of a pram which would double up to be used as a shopping trolley – in some instances it would be used to fetch bagged coal or wood from the ironmongers.

THE NATIONS FOOD

Towards the end of the 1920s the Government started to introduce new measures to support the country's agriculture and farmer's income. Guarantee prices bolstered up the production of

sugar beet and wheat. Meat production was treated in the same manner. The Agricultural Marketing Act of 1928 promoted the standardisation of different grades of produce and its packaging. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food introduced the 'National Mark' a trade-mark to label British produced food - indicating a defined quality in egg production, beef, apples and pears. The Agricultural Marketing Acts of 191 and 1933 advised farmers to form co-operatives out of which came Marketing Boards for hops, potatoes, milk, bacon and pigs. The Import Duties Act 1932 placed an import charge on most foreign produced food stuffs. In 1936, the rent tithe charge for farmers was abolished. The following year saw a scheme introduced to subsidise the spreading of lime on agricultural land to replace some of the minerals lost through planting. Later the Ministry was given powers to regulate and open up dormant land - to regulate the cultivation and management of land, end tenancies, take possession of badly cultivated land and order the use of previously difficult land to plough and water meadows.

MEALS

There was always a set plan for the whole week's meals. The Sunday roast would be eaten as a cold cut on Monday, minced with bread and onion on Tuesdays. Braised steak on Wednesdays, Liver and Bacon Thursdays and Fish on a Friday, Saturdays would be rabbit, lamb chops or mutton stew. Chicken was very rarely eaten even for those who kept them as we did. They were too valuable for laying.

Puddings had the same routine treatment: Sunday's apple pie, Monday apple turnover, Tuesday Apple sharlot, Wednesday Rhubarb tart, Thursday Rice pudding, perhaps with rhubarb, Friday bread and butter pudding, Saturday maybe blancmange and fruit.

There is little doubt that the level of nutritional content to the average British diet was not high. The home produced vegetables were good produced with little or no chemical fertilizers. The locally grown fruit was also grown without an abundance of pesticides. The problem was in the cooking, the amount of highly processed sugar, and the amount of salt, mainly as a preservative.

The amount of cigarette and pipe smoking was high and about to go even higher. Drinking sweet tea, sweetened bottled coffee and sweetened fruit juices complimented the smoking. The level of sweets eaten was also high, particularly for children. It was normal fare to consume very sweet puddings rather than eat fruit or yogurts.

Meal times at home were not only formal but followed a pattern... having stayed with both grandparents theirs too was somewhat similar... this suggests that their lifetime meal habits were roughly the same. As for my friends, from what I observed, and heard about, theirs were exactly the same. During the week breakfast was bread and butter and jam, perhaps a boiled egg, with tea. Coffee was never drunk, marmalade not eaten, and toast never served. At the weekends a fried breakfast of egg, bread, mushroom and bacon, maybe on the menu for Sunday. Saturday would be the same as weekdays - most men worked at least the morning shift. Dinner was an evening meal during the week, and midday at the weekends. In general this was a cooked meal consisting of a roast meat and two veg. variety, with a pudding, usually with a pastry base, with custard or milk. Bread would always be available cut as needed from the board. Tea was only served after the washing up completed. In the country puddings were sometimes served first to take away the pangs of hunger. Tea, at the weekends, was the most formal meal, with sandwiches, cakes and tea. The bread and cakes would be stood

on a doily and the jam covered by a bead fringed net, the butter in its dish. The tea would be served during the meal the cups being passed around the table. Supper was at nine, and laid on the table... maybe a cheese sandwich with tea.

WASHING

Was always done on a Monday, if not raining. Tuesday the washing was dried off, Wednesday it was ironed, Thursday aired and Saturday out away for Sunday – a day of leisure!

Our washing was done in a round zinc tub on the gas stove – to be boiled. From there it was transplanted to the sink to be rinsed and from there to the garden to be mangled and hung on the line. Some of my father shirts, cuffs and collars, would be starched. On occasions a blue bag used to whiten the whites.

This routine was carried out including dusting and sweeping, vacuuming and polishing. The majority of homes had this or a somewhat similar list to be carried out. It not only got things done but allowed friends and neighbours to call at an appropriate hour – to drop in for a cup of tea and a chat, at a reasonable hour when it was normal to have an hour to spare in the afternoon, before the children came in from school – about four.

WIVES & MOTHERS

Girls were seen to be future wives and mothers... This is not a cliché but a matter of fact. It is what they talked about, dreamt of doing, and fantasised about. That is not to say that they didn't have a job after leaving school or that a number did not go onto higher education. If society viewed women as mothers and

wives, in general, that was their goal. Girls, particularly the lower classes, did the things their mother's had done before – it was a normal course of action. When married with a family... this controlled their freedom to alter their status... There was neither home care, kindergartens or part-time work. It was normal for a lone parent to reside with the married daughter when the children left home.

As society changed, as much to do with world wars as evolution, so did women's relationship to their children. Those women, who wanted a different lifestyle, at least in their formative years... gradually, had the opportunity of doing so. What changed was their view of themselves... gradually they reached out to take on a range of jobs that would allow them to have independence, a chance to select for themselves their own life style - when they were to have children, when to have sexual relationships, either casual or long lasting. This came about in the fifties.

There were improvements in a woman's legal status, employment, and social freedoms, but it was little. My mother accepted her position; she had grown into it - doing what her mother had done. She did not question it or rise up against it being subservient in practically all things. In this I believe she was happy. Later on she realized my father's philosophy in life had let her down – allowed her very little say or freedom – this made her resentful.

There was greater regimentation. People tended to observe accepted modes of behaviour adopted from the previous generation. Household routines were commonly observed. The lives of the inhabitants had a pattern dictated by convention and habit. Mothers pushed their babies in coach-built prams that had the ends hinged for the child to sit up... sun-shades an essential requirement. No woman ever wore trousers or shorts. Men

always wore a hat or cap... these were lifted in greeting, removed when entering a building. Men and boys without headgear raised their hand to their forehead. Everyone stood to attention to sing the National Anthem - we children had to stand to attention indoors, when the anthem was played on the radio. If a funeral cortège passed in the street everyone stood still and again hats were raised. Similarly, on November 11th everything stopped for the two minute silence – when the gun went off... once again, hats removed.

No one ever kissed in public or held hands. Men walked on the kerbside when escorting women, opened all doors, offered their seat, proceeded women upstairs, and lead them down... Etiquette, manners, politeness, and respectful behaviour – were the hall marks of a well raised child. Children were only to speak when spoken to... if an answer required, then it had to be brief and to the point. The elderly were given preference when queuing, mothers and babies came second, men followed on... Table manners were taught and rigidly observed. Plates were offered around the table, tea cups passed about. Cutlery never crossed when the table laid. There was no talking whilst eating and mouths were kept shut whilst chewing. Elbows off the table, only wrists rested beside the plate. Soup eaten passing the spoon through the soup away from the body. Children sat up straight and were told not to slump... serviettes laid on their lap... after the meal - returned to their ring.

Sundays were a day or rest. No shops, cinemas, or theatres opened. My father did not allow us to play cards or play outside in the street. My brother and I had to attend church in our 'Sunday best' clothes. Shoes had to be polished, including the insteps, whilst not worn, and long-socks, kept up with an elastic garter. To make the leather soles last longer metal 'blakies' or studs hammered in. Ties were an essential part of dress as were

caps. Pockets were for your handkerchief and small change, not for warming or resting the hands.

No-one thought of walking under ladders. Any spilt salt needed a pinch thrown over the left shoulder to stop having bad luck. Number thirteen was never used and number three would bring success. Crossed cutlery would bring disaster, whilst having a black cat pass before one – good luck would follow. Ancient sayings, and even older natural cures, proliferated. Having a father born in London in 1889 - into a large Victorian family; a mother, who's beginnings resided in a village in Somerset... meant we boys, were inundated with the mores and manners of two diverse social groups.

This quite firm social behaviour only continued until late into the war, when they, and many other conventions, started to crumble. Society changed - in the hardship and emergency of wartime conditions, never to return to such ridged patterns. Unfortunately, the more relaxed, casual behaviour of the sixties completely undermined the more charming conventions and manners of previous generations – the observance of 'social etiquette', toward: the aged, women, children, handicapped, under-privileged, and very poor... disappeared. The future lay with Government inspired Social Welfare... which meant, relying on the state... the 'nanny state' took hold...!

CHAPTER V

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

THE PHONY WAR: - Appeasement - Imperial Defence - Sirens - Evacuation - Shelters - Black Out - Allotments - Dig for Victory - Make do and Mend - Dress of the Day - Talking costs Lives - Rationing - The Blitz - Sand Bags - Air Raid Precautions.

The Committee for Imperial Defence agreed that a subcommittee should be instigated to look into the organization for a war: of civil and home defence, censorship, and war emergency legislation. This group was called the Air Raid Precautions subcommittee, eventually to be run by General Ismay. In 1933, local authorities were chosen as the agency to be responsible of local organization. The ARP was organized as a department of the Home Office under the control of Wing Commander E J Hodsall in 1935. The same year Germany re-established her air force. It was this action which drove the ARP to start issuing instructions to the local authorities, merchant shipping lines and fire services.

In September 1935 local authorities were invited to make plans for the building of shelters. These were made out of brick and roofed with reinforced concrete. We had one built at the bottom of the road only being used for the first few air raid warning gradually neglected and left damp, dark and very uninviting!

Gradually, the possibility of war increased to the extent that in 1937 the ARP issued an appeal for volunteers. A year later the ARP Act came into force, compelling all local authorities to set up schemes to enrol: wardens, first aid and ambulance services, gas precautions: The Auxiliary Fire Services, including rescue, repair and demolition: there would be first aid posts, gas decontamination and casualty clearing stations. That year, in 1938, the service was put on standby and trenches dug in all London parks and sand bags filled to protect doorways.

The duties of the police were increased, unable to carry out all the tasks a band of Police Reserves took over some of their jobs. Later, in 1938, the Women's Voluntary Services was formed to help the ARP. They did most of the tasks asked of the men including being responsible for children, providing food and medical support. Sir John Anderson started to distributed one and a half million shelters made out of six curved steel plates – as a roof, sealed at either end by further steel plates. It measured 6' 6" by 4' 6" – meant to accommodate six people. The shelters were supposed to be half buried. In the even they became filled with water or at best extremely damp. These shelters were free to the poor or cost seven pounds to the well paid. Morrison shelters were issued three years later and represented a heavy steel table with wired sides, to sleep two adults.

Our ARP man cycled around on his bike in his normal clothes with a black and white ARP armband. He was a part-time volunteer. When the 'blackout' restrictions came into being the Auxiliary Fire Service was too... it was the start to all the other emergency arrangements put into place. The early air raid warning siren droned its message - warning of an approaching enemy aircraft. The wardens were trained in all aspects of rescue work, first aid, bomb protection and supervised the use of road shelters. The Civil Defence services did not get their uniforms until 1941.

After Neville Chamberlain became prime minister in May 1937 the topic of the country's newspaper's was politics – international rather than home. The main point of discussion was about stopping Italy and Germany from expanding their economies by armament production and, seeking to enlarge their territories by force. The new prime minister elected to do this by giving in to their demands in a spirit of cooperation and reasonableness – to win them over by friendliness. Chamberlain

acted desperately to stop the progression towards this aggressive behaviour. This period of 'appeasement' lasted over a year. Towards the end the inevitability of war became apparent and national defence took the place of the previous concessions. It was the Foreign Secretary Edward Halifax who realised the extent of German ambitions when Hitler occupied the final part of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. He did an about face pushing Chamberlain to offer a guarantee to the Polish Nation - that Britain would support them if threatened by an outside force. The Prime Minister lost all creditability when Norway fell to a German invasion... supported Halifax to succeed him as leader. Halifax realised that he did not have the full support of the Conservative Party. Churchill was asked by the King to form a coalition with Labour and Liberal participation.

IMPERIAL DEFENCE

War was declared on the 3rd September 1939. The following day The Committee for Imperial defence started England's war machine. The defence team included: Major Leslie Hollis, Wing Commander William Elliot, Major Ian Jacob, and Lieutenant Lord Coleridge. This was later combined into a single War Cabinet Secretariat under Sir Edward Bridges and the military side under General Ismay. It was Ismay who informed Churchill of suggestions and decisions made. Britain entered the war supplying only forty per cent of the country's needs. The Ministry of Food was formed on the 8th September under William Morrison as its head.

In July 1940 the Local Defence Volunteers had their name changed to the Home Guard. This force stayed in existence until December 1944. During their operational service they manned guard posts, observation posts and coastline defences, whilst

acting to combat parachutists and spies... some were trained to act as guerrilla units behind enemy lines.

SIRENS

Stanley, my brother, started school for the first time that week, and I followed on a year later. We expected German planes to fly over immediately, but none arrived. The air-raid sirens were sounded for the first time to alert people to their sound. The local Air Raid Protection Officer cycled round on his bike blowing his whistle shouting out that when we heard the sirens we should 'take cover'.

EVACUATIONS

In London the evacuations started. Queues formed outside main line stations for children to be lead off to their appointed trains. Sand bags were being hurriedly filled and placed at door entrances and directions posted telling people where their nearest air raid shelter sited. Volunteers were asked for to fill the vacancies for jobs on the Home Front – as Air Raid Wardens, ambulances and fire service. Women too were not excluded manning fire fighting posts, enrolled as bus conductors and ambulance drivers.

My parents did not consider it necessary for us boys to be evacuated. Whether or not they would have joined the scheme if we had lived closer into the heart of London I do not know. It was never mentioned even after the largest raids during The Blitz.

ALLOTMENTS – DIG FOR VICTORY

The Government's slogan 'Dig for Victory' emblazoned posters and hoardings. The charismatic Minister of Food Lord

Woolton instigated this call to the nation which became a great success. He promoted various schemes to improve plant growth printing books and leaflets detailing the importance of compost heaps and plant care. This was done using cartoon pictures of two characters Doctor Carrot and Potato Pete. Carrots were considered necessary 'to help see in the dark', promoted by a fighter pilot describing how he managed to shoot down a German plane in the dark. On the radio there was much talk about happening 'on the home-front' keeping the population alive to the need for self help.

Woolton's slogans and posters were first used in September 1939, extolling everyone to consider every plot of ground - to grow fruit and vegetables - to be self sufficient. The majority of our neighbours did so in various degrees. My father dug out some plots in the lawn built a large chicken run stocked with laying boxes and kept a rabbit. Some neighbours produced their own vegetables, others kept chickens and ducks, and some chose to keep both. There was a scheme to breed more pigs. A special pig food collection scheme was put into place for shopkeepers and the general public to contribute to. Local parks and recreation grounds were ploughed up for wheat production as was spare railway land, and roadside verges.

All these schemes were put into place - certainly at the start of the war with Government leaflets and booklets giving instructions on all aspects of planting, one was entitled Allotments and Garden Guide published in 1943. The production of kitchen gardens and allotments was so successful that natural fertilizers and manure ran out. A National Growmore fertilizer, made out of balanced chemicals was made available by George Monro & Sons. Gradually, these petered out, as the war progressed - as it became obvious that the war was being won.

Eighty per cent of all allotments were to be found in urban areas. The Ministry of Agriculture promoted a scheme for the unemployed in conjunction with the Society of Friends, the National Allotments Committees, and a number of Benevolent Societies.

Dig for Victory was a huge success begun without any idea that it would have such a long lasting effect upon the community. Imports of food dropped by fifty per cent, and the acreage of land ploughed increased by eighty per cent. Once the habit was formed and the people caught on to its worthwhileness it became something to be proud of - became a talking point with ones neighbours.

MAKE DO AND MEND

The effort to become less reliant on imports ran with the national effort to 'Make do and Mend'. This was to stop people wastefully buying new things, many of them being imports. Schools and local social groups collected scrap metal and ran jumble sales to collect money to help buy an aeroplane. Other groups knitted socks or gloves for the military. Merchant ships were commissioned to transport war materials, troops and the few items that the country was incapable of producing for itself. Before the war Britain imported fifty-five million tons of food mostly from America and Canada.

As children we carefully collected bottles to take back to the shop for the payment of a halfpenny. Newspapers and magazines carefully hoarded, and old iron, aluminium pots and pans ended up on the scrap heap. The rag and bone man circled the streets with his horse and cart as did the scrap metal collector. Iron railings were offered up and the pig cart arrived to take away kitchen scraps for the council pigs.

Household baths could only be filled to four inches, rags sewn together to make rugs. Wool wound on sticks then cut to size - knotted on hessian - to make wool rugs. Bricks placed at the back of the fire to save room for the scarce coal... and mothers always knitting for the family or for the army. Jig saws entertained the family on long winter night, whilst listening to ITMA and Tommy Handley, or 'Have a Go' with Wilfred Pickles.

DRESS OF THE DAY - FASHION

All men wore a jacket, and during their working day a suit – which included a waistcoat... The suits were either black with pin-striped trousers, or dark blue. Shoes were always black Oxfords – with a toe cap. It was considered undignified to wear brown shoes or brogues - suede, positively frowned on. Socks were dark held up by suspenders. Shirts white- or white with a faint stripe. Detached collars, just being ousted by attached collars, although cuffs were double length using a sleeve band. A striped tie - usually with a military or club connection completed his formal wear... all the above, set off by a furled umbrella, leather gloves and brief-case. A bowler hat was essential for senior staff, a trilby more popular, and a cap for manual workers. On a fine day a Macintosh – perhaps a trench coat might be carried instead of an umbrella. Although my father carried a silver knobbed walking stick - a rarity most sported a round handled stick or just used an umbrella.

For casual wear, tweed jacket and grey trousers, an approved combination. No jumpers were worn but cardigans either worn over a waist coat or on their own. Short sleeved shirts, shorts, sandals, beach shoes and an open necked shirt, rarely seen.

Women, who worked in London, during the thirties, were mainly office workers – generally secretaries or filing clerks. Banks, libraries, shops and nursing staff, made up a large quota... factory workers lived closer into London. As with men there was a set dress code which consisted of a long dress – to within fourteen inches of the floor, which was of floral, striped or poker dot design, with a belt, choker or silk scarf around the neck, plus patent leather bag and umbrella... court shoes, the universally accepted style favoured by most women. Stockings, suspender belt, and corset, continued to be worn for the next twenty years. A raincoat, with broad pointed collar, and turned-up cuffs, in a pastel colour, favoured by most.

CARELESS TALK COSTS LIVES

A poster, showing a parrot on a perch, in bright yellow and red feathers, declared 'Careless Talk Costs Lives'. This poster was displayed in all areas where numbers of people gathered – bus stations, train platforms, Doctor's surgeries and buses. The object was to remind people to be aware that spies used everyday conversations to build up a picture of the nation's spirit – will to withstand pain and hardship. They could also pick up where bodies of troops were - what detachments made up the troop concentrations. Lord Woolton considered it essential that the community was reminded why they were being asked to submit to hardships – that every person should back up the nations will to survive - keep steady behind the government.

RATIONING

It did not take the Government long before food had to be rationed. Clothing, coal, and petrol soon added to the list. Game birds, rabbits, hares, horse meat and chickens were not rationed.

Ration Book was issued in September 1939 in readiness for the start date of January, the following year. Nearly fifty per cent of the population were in the age band fifteen to forty-five.

The rationing 'points' system was put into place to regularise distribution. Pregnant women, young children, and those on a diet had their special needs met. There were no objections to rationing as everyone thought it equitable. As for any 'black market', it was talked about but we were never involved and I am sure my mum would not have known where to go to get it! Householders had to declare where they were going to shop when they filled in the ration book.

Healthy eating was not mentioned at home, it wasn't thought about, or planned for. We ate exactly what we had always eaten— the diet we were used to – that did not require great changes to be made or thinking about to plan for. Any deficiencies like the lack of sugar was made up by saccharine, lack of fresh milk – by adopting powdered, the same as eggs and potatoes. The dried eggs were tried but only used in cooking. The dried potatoes were simply awful and never eaten. Mum was a wonder at 'making do' making meals look appetising even if they were lacking in quality. Rabbit and fish were eaten more times than before the war; mince was liberally bulked out with bread, onion and carrot. Spam was fried or made into toad-in-the-hole. Milk puddings, apple pie, blackberries from the country hedge, rhubarb, bread and butter puddings, suet puddings and dried fruit with junket. Only very occasionally mum borrowed sugar from next door.

London County Council organised a Meals Service which started in September 1940 and from this evolved into the British Restaurants, designed for emergency eating, especially for those 'bombed out'. By mid 1941, there were two hundred working, one of them built at the bottom of the road, on Station Road.

It was that September, 1940, that Germany began fifty-eight consecutive nights of bombing – this was The Blitz... the first time that we saw, felt and appreciated the seriousness of the situation. I was five, and going to school...!

THE LAST DAYS OF 1939.

We were all quite disappointed. When we heard our Prime Minister declaring war we believed the guns would start firing and bombs would be dropped. |This wasn't to be. Despite the country's guarantee to Poland the government had no plans in place to conduct a war. This was known as The Phoney War and lasted for nine months. It is just as well for we were ill prepared and nine months would give us some chance to catch up and show our metal. My father was the Regiments longest serving non commissioned soldier. As Regimental Sergeant Major his task was to instil discipline and act as a sort of policeman making sure standards were kept and routines upheld. He was commissioned as a major becoming second in command of the 17th London Division, detailed off to start planning for the supposed German invasion. One of his tasks was to develop a corps of individuals to lay low after an invasion to act as a behind an invasion gorilla force. His task was to plan and staff a number of secret hideaway locations in and around Epping Forest – only to surface after the Germans had passed by - to attack them from the rear.

I do hope this account has made the picture clear. These are not jaundiced or romantic views but drawn from reliable sources and my own memory - of times lived and observed. If you read 'In the First Fifteen' you will add still more colour, and finer detail...

One of the more noticeable differences, and keenly felt, comparing the two societies – then and now, is the lack of a few hard working, socially minded individuals, both men and women, who gave their free-time to the young. Just after WWII youth clubs and associations flourished. It was unusual for a boy not to be enrolled in some official body: The Scouts, Boys Brigade, Church Lads Brigade, Youth Club, YMCA, or one of the three Cadet Corps. Girls too had their associations but they tended to finish once they had left school. These societies had their own creed but most were attached to a church... linking the young to: The Country's Religion, Ruling Body [Establishment] and Royal Family.

When making a comparison of the town when built to the present day the aesthetic differences would be: a spoliation of the general spaciousness, and quietness - by the abundance of vehicles, the lack of variety - of shops, amount of litter, casualness of dress – introduction of jeans, lack of school uniforms and women's dresses; lowering of personal orderliness, an obvious absence of charm – noticeable when comparing: hoardings, posters, point of sale cards and general advertising – garish colours, the absence of prams. Poor design of shop fronts, window dressing, lamp posts and street furniture. Above all, a noticeable social change is the absence of the ABC Cinema - its flower beds - front publicity islands - and railings.