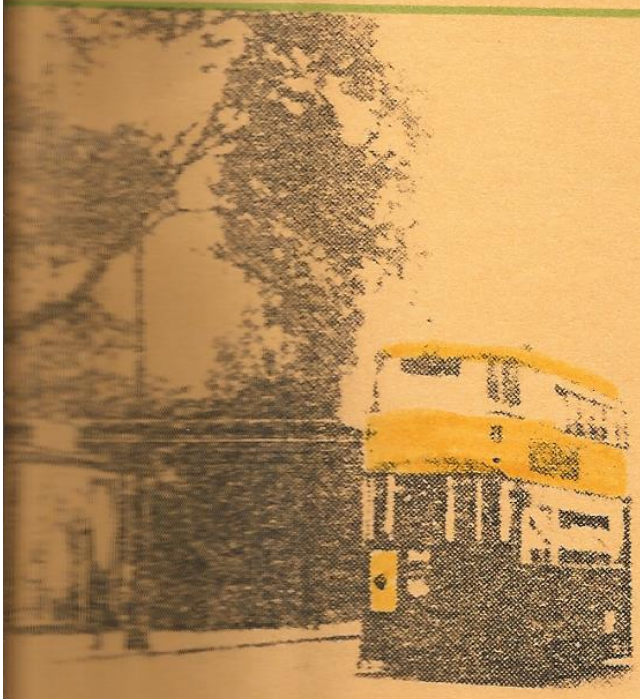
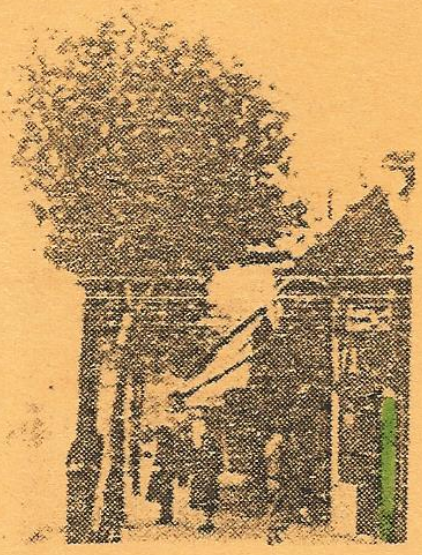
THE PLACE WHERE I LIVED...

(OLD
ST ANNS WELL RD,)

NOTTINGHAM

1913-1940





MEMORIES
FROM : ALBERT SPOONER

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Spooner, Albert
The place where I was born: Old St Anns
Nottingham

I.Title.
942.527

ISBN I-85620-I20-I

prints. E.Glover, Nottingham.

Published by:

STYLUS PUBLICATIONS
I8 Sharnford
The Haulgh
Bolton.

A Social History Publication.

St.Anns Well Road, lies in a valley, and what I call our part of it, started at the junction of Coppice Road, Wells Road and Bartholomews Road - more commonly known in those days as Donkey Hill. Each and every one of those roads to me, was an escape to greener pastures and perhaps an adventure or two thrown in for good measure. I never thought about it at the time, but I realised later, that I was instinctively drawn to green fields - trees and water, in other words, they were part a part of me.

Coppice Road, now known as Ransom Road, led up from the Wells Road end, by a short row of houses on the left. The Emmanuel Hall was on the right and from there, to the Coppice recreation ground, were allotments. A thickly wooded spinney bordered the rec, and from there was Caunton Avenue and Blyth Street before reaching Woodborough Road at the top.

The Coppice Recreation Ground was quite a long one, it started from the keepers house near the gate that led to the Hunger Hill gardens. The Rec was very popular with the children. The girls had their games on it while the boys played football, climbed trees in the spinney and slid one footed down gullies, wetted for the occasion down a steep clay bank. Mind you, it was rather hard on the britches and shoes, but what lad can resist a slide. The school also held their sports day on it and for a time, the St.Anns Rose Show was held on it.

Opposite the top entrance of the rec, was a Lodge belonging to the Coppice Mental Home, and during the coal strike we used to be able to get a basin of dripping from there. Mind you, it was said amongst the smaller boys, that it was better to take your boots off when passing there, since if they heard you, they would come out and drag you in. Coppice Road holds many memories. I recall one year that

we had a very heavy snow fall - it was banked up on either side and a sledge-track was made from top to bottom. It was a really beautiful track and if you had a really big sledge you could start at the very top and go right to the bottom. The ride down was great but it was a long walk back.

Opposite the Coppice Road was Bartholomews Road, it was a very steep hill which led to Bakers Fields, Thorneywood, The Pads, and what we called the Tin Banks. There was a pond there where you could catch sticklebacks and newts and all you needed was a stick or cane from your Dad's garden - a piece of black cotton and a bent pin, plus a jam jar of course. If you cut over the iron bridge over the railway at Thorneywood, you could nip across Carlton Road to the Clay Mounts which were old brickyard workings that had been left with mounds or mixed peaks of clay and gypsum. They were grand for climbing, but made a right mess of your clothes.

On the pads across the Porchester Road, were fields where you could play football or fly kites. Occasionally, we would dig up what we called 'pig nuts', they were actually the roots of a bulbus rooted plant but they tasted quite sweet. Yes, once away up that Donkey Hill, the world was your oyster. Gedling Woods for bluebells,violets and primroses and Woodborough for a special dell where masses of those primroses further grew - alas, all gone today.

Donkey Hill incidentally, was the fastest sledge run. Although the police station was just across the road, they didn't bother us since they were most understanding most of the time. The Wells Road, in my opinion, was the grandest of the lot. It stretched from the number six tram terminus right up to the Plains, and on either side was lined with conker trees. One for every day of the year, three hundred

and sixty five in all. I'd been up some of those and knocked 'conks' off many others. Mind you, I've never counted them, but my dad said it was the right number of trees and I sure he was right.

At the bottom of Hendon Rise was the garages of the 'Brooke Bonds Tea Company' and every week day morning a string of Trojan vans would come out. They had such narrow wheels that on a wet day, should they get in the tram lines, they would skid all over the place. On the Coppice Vale side, just above the old coal sidings, was the last row of houses. All those gardens had earned me many a three or sixpenny pieces for those buckets of 'hoss muck'. There was a tunnel on the Coppice Vale that ran to Sherwood Vale not far from one of the smaller entrances to Woodthorpe Park - a long dark tunnel, since I recall, as a dare, I ventured through and it was fortunate that the trains didn't run very frequently.

St.Anns Well Road, from the church grounds on the Blue Bell Hill, you could look over quite a lot of the road. You could look down on a sea of blue-grey slated rooftops which a pall of coal-fire smoke seemed to perpetually hang. I used to liken the road, plus all those streets running off it, resembling something of that of a skeleton of a flat fish. The fifth bone from the Wells Road end was our Edwin Street, the place where I lived.

I was the youngest of six boys and four girls - a large family but I think that was the rule rather than the exception in those early days. Our house was no different to any other in the street, nor any different to any other in the whole area. Our clothes were much the same, girls and boys dresses and britches equally patched up and mended with jerseys and stockings equally darned. There were times when we were equally hungry as the rest of the neighbourhood,

The road was laid from end to end with cresoted wooden blocks and two sets of tram lines were set in them. The blocks were sprayed with tar with granite chippings spread over, and the whole lot, steam-rollered in.

The tram that served the district was a number six. It started from the bottom of Donkey Hill and ran the whole length of the road up King Edward Street; running through the old market by the Walter Fountain and Grey-friar Gate and on along Castle Boulevard to Lenton being its destination. Those trams bring back a lot of nostalgia, they could be driven from either end and the conductors became quite adept at swinging the poles round to connect on the overhead wires for the return journey. The open top trams were mainly used on the number seven London Road route at weekends for the Football Matches at the Notts County and Nottingham Forest grounds. For the driver I always thought it was a feat of endurance, especially in winter, despite being muffeled-up to the eyebrows in heavy uniform, waterproof aprons and mittens.

To the fringe of that sea of blue-grey rooftops at the bottom of Donkey Hill again, let me say that, should any of those people who lived in those streets be reading this, I should like to say how proud and glad I am to have known and lived amongst you. We may have been poor but we were proud, loyal, with a sense of fair play that made a community spirit that will always live atleast in my memory.

The streets on the right from the Wells Road End were, Westminster Street, Lotus Street, Norland Road, Duncombe Street and our Edwin Street. On the left: Bilbery Street, Bullace Road, Twells Street, Jackson Street, Meridth Street and Bombay Street. Old residents will no doubt remember the many other streets along the road as I do, since their

lives must have run in a similar pattern as my own. The shops in the immediate area were what you might say- sufficient for the immediate needs. Other essential requirements always being obtainable at the shopper's mecca of those days, the ever dependable 'Hockley'. That is where most of the Provident trading checks were spent, something new and something to pop into Uncle's when times got hard. Yes, there were hard times and our family were no exception. I knew that side entrance of pledges with the ticket pinned on them. I knew too, the heartache, when the pledge was refused, when the women had to walk away with tears in their eyes. They survived, someone would help them through, but believe me, it was a hard struggle at times.

As a matter of interest, I'll mention a few of the shops on the road. From the Wells Road end were: Hensons Coal Yard and sweet shop, Sharpes paper shop. Sykes the fish and veg, Carlisle the barbers, Fox, where the herb and ginger beer was sold in those stone bottles at a penny and three halfpence a time, Weatherhalls the hardware shop, Dobneys the greengrocer,Extons, where those super colwick cheeses were so popular, Whitings and Poysers the three brass balls hung out so prominently, Spencers that lovely chip shop who did such a roaring trade on a Friday, Ma Duffties and Holliwells the beeroffs and so on.

Strecker's, famous for its beautiful and appetising smells as a pork shop that also sold faggots with their thick and thin gravy, plus those steaming skeps of black puddings, the roast pork, home-cured bacon now almost unobtainable today. What a lovely shop that was! You could practically get anything you wanted on that road and the shopkeepers more often than not, knew more about you than your neighbours. Just before the Corporation Road, was the St.Anns Church School and the church itself. The

Picture Palace where we had the tuppenny rushes on a Saturday was opposite, showing Eddie Polo, Pearl White, Richard Talmadge, Tom Mix and all the rest of those early days heroes. The chase is one of the few things that have not changed, it still goes up across the Woodborough Road and finishes just off the Mansfield Road. My brother and I, after a wet day, with the aid of a carbide lamp, have gathered many a bucket of worms and sold them to the fish and tackle dealer on the Union Road. Across the Chase was a number of shops among which Hopwells, Home and Colonial and others.

All the streets of St.Anns Well Road were laid with granite cobble stones, every last one of them as far as I recall. The curbs were of six foot lengths of York stone and the pavements of diamond patterned blue brick. In the autumn when the leaves had fallen from the conk trees on the Wells Road, and there happened to be someone seriously ill on the street, they would spread the leaves on the pavement in front of the house in order to deaden the sound of the coal barrows coming from Mrs.Smith's the coal dealer higher up the street. There was an entry to every six or eight houses in the street and sometimes an archway that led to stables or business premises. The houses in lots of cases stretched in an unbroken line from top to bottom. Usually there was a lamp post at the top, one in the middle and one at the bottom, which was very convenient on the dark nights when the lads were playing chock. Chock was a game of marbles and most of the younger kids played rollers but the older ones played chock. To play, a hole had to be scraped out from between the granite cobble stones, usually about four or five inches long and the width had to be the next cobble stone. The marbles were of clay and varied in colour, some were glass and some came from the old lemonade bottle necks- so long as it rolled, it was accepted! If a boy was skint,

he could volunteer to keep watchout for the police and if he shouted 'cops' every one would scoop up their marbles and dash for the nearest entry until they had gone by. It wasn't very often that anyone got caught but if you did, it usually meant only a light flick across the ears with the gloves they carried. We could play skimmings with pic-cards against any old wall, or the girl's could skip with the lengths of straw ropes that was usually available off the orange boxes. We would tie a length to the arm of a lamp post and swing round on them.

If a neighbour was poorly, there would be someone to do a bit of shopping for them or help generally, and at that time, that care and understanding quality developed a memorable community spirit which I mentioned earlier. The children had an instinctive feel of belonging, their family came first and last, and what is more, they were generally accepted by the other mothers. If a child nipped in home for a slice of bread and lard, his or her pal, had one cut also. Another popular playground for mainly lads was the Flower Show Field. This was a piece of waste ground which stretched from the backs of Calcutta Street, Southampton Street. There were hoardings on the front half of it and the shops of the St Anns Well Road on the other half. In the middle of the first half was a football pitch which backed up to a stone wall that blocked off the end of Calcutta Street. If there were enough lads about, either from our area or Blue Bell Hill, we would pick a side apiece and have a game.

Our house, like the others, had the same number of rooms and the same conditions with their problems too. All had a front room, a living room, and a scullery. Up the first flight of stairs were bedrooms front and back, a gas lamp in front of the large bedroom and living room and candle light in all the others. In those days with large families,

it wasn't at all unusual for the children to sleep four in a bed, I know we four lads did, two at the top and two at the bottom. The candlestick was placed on a chair that stood at the side of the bed and the eldest one usually blew the candle out. Sometimes he would make the shadow of a hand as though it was coming to get hold of us and we two younger lads would duck our heads under the bed clothes to hide from it.

Eventually, as we grew older we had another bed on the other side of the room. It was while we four lads were still in that top room about nineteen seventeen when we saw the German Zeppalin come over. We looked out from our front top bedroom window and saw it coming towards us. We all crowded round the window and when it had passed over we dashed down to our sisters bedroom at the rear of the house and watched it as it went out of sight. To my younger brother and I, it was just an incident, we had no comprehension of the horrors of that war, or even of the terrific loss of men, including our own eldest brother. Yes, those houses were very standardised with the same fireplaces, boiler on one side hob and oven on the other. The scullery was the same, gas oven on the left and the copper and firegrate in the right hand corner. The tub toilets across the yard were backed up to those of the houses in the next street, with only a single brick wall between them. I think it was only those toilets that held the wall up!

All the bedrooms had fire places but rarely a fire. Coal was so dear we couldn't afford it, plus the risk of fire was too great. Consequently, the rooms were always damp in winter leaving colour-wash and wallpaper being discoloured with patches of dark mould. It was a constant struggle against pests and parasites, bugs and fleas in the bedrooms and silver fish and blackclocks in the

fireplaces. It wasn't because the people were dirty or uncaring, they swilled backyards and pavements often and most houses had their tins of Keatings Powder or the equivilent. Believe me, the 'Boots' on the road did a roaring trade in that respect. Tubercolosis reared its ugly head as did scarlet fever and still more deadly, dipheria. Those black horses of Bamfords the undertakers, were a familiar sight on the roads. Many pets were kept in those back yards, which may explain to some extent, the activity of mice. I know that over the years we had quite a large variety of pets, Pidgeons, Rabbits, Hares, Guinea Pigs, Fowls, Bantams and even a ferret or two. Nevertheless, it was a way of life in those days, something to create an interest as much as the telly does now.

As regards the dialect of the St Anns District, I think it was a natural product of any given area. A particular mode of speech is apparant in many districts only a few miles of the city. In fact, the same applies all over the country. A typical conversation between two boys would be as follows: "Hey Bert, a shunt gerr-on ta owd Batesy if I was yo, i towd mi is dads bin a boxer. Gerroff, I don't believe that, is dad cunt box kippers, ow kid cud beat im wi wan and tied bi-hind is back, ya know wi cun all box at ow ouse. Dint and int it, still slip out at times."

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Bonfire night was always looked forward to. It was the time when it gave every one the chance to clear out their rubbish - all the old mattresses etc etc. The kids would go round the shops on the road for whatever they wanted to get rid of and it would all be stored in various back yards until the actual night. Usually, there was a fire at both ends of the street (just as well, considering

the amount of rubbish turned out) and believe me, some of those mattresses were long overdue - they didn't half crackle when the fire got hold. Fireworks were not so dear, since you could buy good bangers for ½d or Id - rockets were 2d and most of the others, ditto. The parents, or least some of them, would roast potatoes or make a bit of bonfire-toffee and in the following morning, when the ashes had cooled down, would come out with their buckets and brooms to clear the remains away. Most of them would put a bucketful of ash in their bins and the granite cobbles would be clear then for the horse-drawn delivery vans, hawkers etc. Those granite cobbles have many stories to tell, the hawkers with their barrows, all the horse-drawn milk and bread vans, coal drays and the numerous hawkers selling everything under the sun.

Now and again, someone would nip out with a dustpan and bucket for the horse-droppings for their back gardens. The load of coke would be delivered to the school cellars and so the buckets would be out again to gather up the spillings. When there was no school, games of lurky, stick and goose, rum stick a bum, top spinning and many others would be played in the street. Weather permitting, the women would sit on their doorsteps doing lace work. The wicker basket would be trundled up the street giving work out, and then down again, gathering it in. Yes, looking back, those streets were full of character, but we never saw it as such, it was our environment and were just living and growing up in it.

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Voting day in the St Anns Ward during the 1920s was quite an occasion. Not just for the adults but for the children too. Although I used to marvel how serious the parents took their voting, and how their front room windows bedecked

a poster of the candidate, it did mean of course, that we kids had a day off school to have fun in the streets with placards on poles or red, blue or yellow streamers tied on sticks. The grapevine among children was very good. They soon found out which committee room had received its supplies of favours and then haunted their life out until they got what they wanted. Usually, a man with a large rosette with the candidate's colours pinned to his lapel, would be engaged specially to escort a crowd of youngsters up and down the streets. Those children didn't need telling what to do. They waved their placards and steamers and chanted the virtues of the candidate they were supporting: "Vote, Vote, Vote for Mr So & So, you cannot vote for a better man, for HE is our man, and we'll have him if we can, and we'll knock the other So & So on the floor - Hoo-ray, Hoo-ray!"

Whenever an opposition group passed, the singing grew louder and the placards and streamers waved harder. They really enjoyed themselves marching up and down those streets or riding on the horse and dray that was also engaged as extra attraction. I'm inclined to think that occasionally, some of the children changed favours for a ride on those drays.

Sometimes the winning candidate would stand a party afterwards, but I don't recall my ever going to one, perhaps I supported the wrong man! For some time after, homes would be littered with those coloured paper streamers and the girls would make paper chains and plait them and the boys would use them to make tails for their kites. Eventually, a mother would say: 'Enough is enough', and a fire was made of the residue.

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The Goose Fair in the 1920s, at least in my opinion, was the best ever. It took up the whole of the market square

and the overflow of smaller stalls - hawker's balloon sellers and what have you, stretched halfway up King Street, Long Row, Smithy Row, Angel Row and Market Street. The side shows like the performing fleas, the Bearded Lady, largest rat in the world, Midget Village and Boxing Booth etc., were at the Exchange end. The roundabouts, the horses and peacocks catapillar, helter-skelter cakewalk etc., were in the middle. The large traction steam engines stood at the side of them, humming with the power they were producing to run the shows and make such a glittering spectacle at night. Music from the organ of the larger roundabouts could be heard everywhere. Those painted and polished moving figures all moving in time to the music and appearing to play some instrument, fascinated me.

Normal weeks, the pot market and fish and chip stalls, with their coke fires plied their trade and that was the place I was making for. Making my way along the St Anns Well Road, I was turning it over in my mind, just what I would spend the two and sixpence on. My route took me to Commercial Square up the Union Road, over the Victoria footbridge.

The walls of the bridge were covered with adverts: Mazzawatta Tea, Zebbra Grate Polish and Watsons Soap etc. Must be a rum sort of tea I thought as I made my way across Milton Street to Trinity Square - 'cannot be as good as Brook Bonds'.

I wasn't so far away now, across Parliament Street and I could see the fair from the top of King Street. Clutching my money in one good pocket, I made towards the Helter Skelter. The fair was very crowded and quite a few were trying the slide out. Some came swishing down minus their mats while one brave one descended on his tummy. I had just had a fresh patch on my britches and didn't intend coming down without my mat. However, I was not so lucky, the mat beat me to it and I got several laughs when I reached the

bottom.

The Catapillar was my next choice. It was fairly fast and I liked the bit where the corrugated green cover came up and covered all. Usually the girls, and women, squealed their heads off, but they were enjoying it just the same. Threading my way through the crowds, I came to the big Swing Boats. I watched while they gained momentum and heard more screams from the females when the boat peaked - hung for a moment, before dropping down again. No, I thought, I've got to save something for some brandy-snap and ginger biscuits. So I made my way towards the boxing booth where four boxers and the showman were just mounting the platform for the start of the show. After telling the onlookers how the show was the best in the fair, the man started the bit that I had been waiting for. From the side of the platform he drew a long gleaming bright sword and then looking down to the platform's front, he said to the few lads there, "Who's the bravest of you lot, there?" Of course they all said ME! However, the lad would go on the platform, be told to hold his arm out with palm upwards, and have a potato placed on it. Next, he would take an hair from the lad's head, pretend to cut the hair and shout: "Sharp as a razor." The lad's hand usually shook like mad when the showman brought the sword down as though to cut the potato in half. The onlookers enjoyed it all and the lad was then told to go in. At that point, all challenges were thrown out and when someone thought they were good enough to last the three rounds, a pair of gloves would be thrown to them.

Usually, the prize was five pounds for lasting the distance. When all the challengers had been accepted and the show about to start, I moved away towards the coconut stand. Sometimes if you were lucky, a good aimer would give you a nut, so I went and stood near the wooden balls.

Four balls for sixpence. There were large piles of 'nuts on the front stall and the dummies at the back were perched high up on the stands - it took only a little touch to topple them off. Mind you, it was marvelous how many did miss. There were some bad aimers and good ones, those tin shields at the rear of the stall donged quite a lot. I always thought that there was more rapport between showman and fairgoer then that's seldom seen today. They didn't seem to mind if you won since every nut you knock off, you win - was the cry. I began to think my luck was out with regards to those free nuts, with the good aimers being few and far between. Yet, just before I was about to leave, a young, well-built chap, stood forward. His first ball caught a pair of nuts dead centre, both falling to the ground. The second shot donged on the shield but the third removed a single 'nut. Spitting on the last ball, the young man turned to me and said: "This one is for you laddie." There was no mistake, he was a smashing aimer, and each 'nut was shook to see if it was milky. The one he gave to me didn't last long when I got it home, but mum enjoyed the brandy-snap and ginger biscuits.

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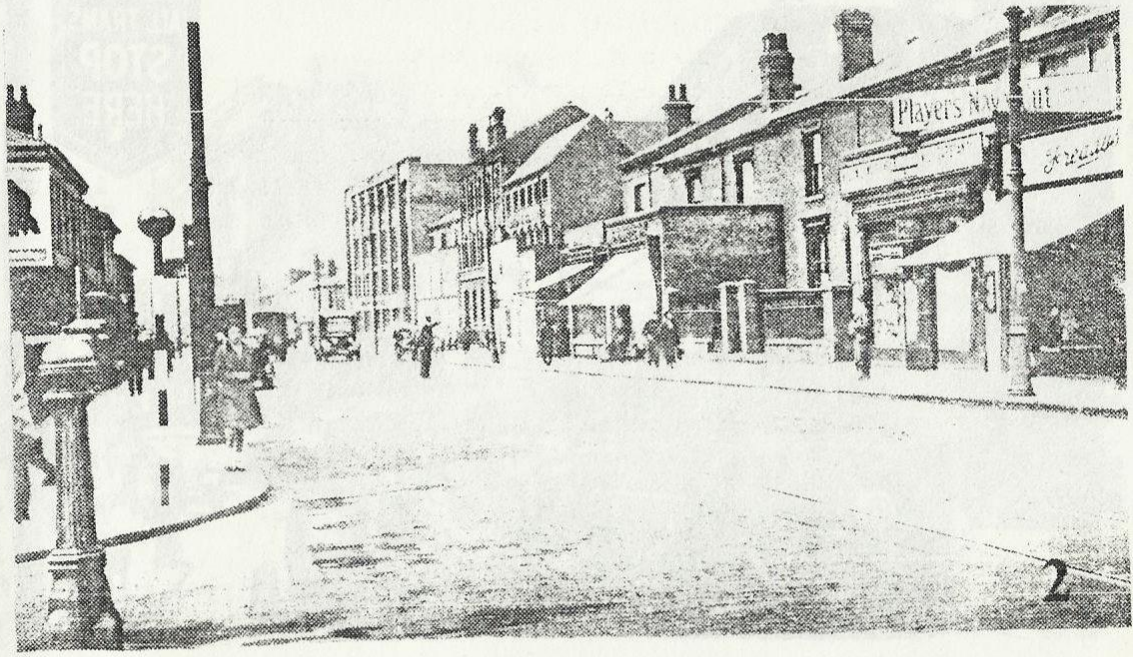
Christmas was only a fortnight away but no-one seemed to be looking forward to it. The General Strike was not long over leaving an aftermath of poverty and depression. Families were still struggling and money was so very short. There was also a decided nip in the air and coal wasn't so very plentiful either. Fortunately, I had managed to get a Saturday job with Johnny Hopewell, our local butcher, just around the bottom of the street. He supplied me with an apron and I took out the orders on a carrier bike with a very large wicker basket. I also trimmed the large marrow bones, swept and sawdusted the floor, and made myself



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Strangely, Johnny didn't say very much. He took the orders to the back of the shop, cleaned them up with a knife and a damp cloth then sent me on my way again. There were no complaints from the customers and I managed a few coppers from them.

Pop Day morning I was up a bit earlier since I had to fetch two-pennyworth of pot-herbs from the greengrocer at the bottom of Martin Street. There'd be some Irish stew simmering on the fireside hob for dinner. Pop Day, by the way, was the name we gave to Monday. It was the day when things redeemed on the Friday previous were popped back into the care of 'Uncle' again. For some, it was a regular pilgrimage and believe me, there were many Uncles on our road.

Curiously enough, the entrances to the pledging departments were nearly always discreetly in a side street, yet those three large brass balls were always boldly displayed at the front. Kind of retarded sympathy I thought. However, I was fetching pot herbs and had got to the bakers shop at the bottom of Beverley Street and there stood Charlie. Before I could say anything, he got hold of my arm and drew me back to the railings of the steps where you descended to the baker's ovens. "Shush, keep back here and see if you can tell me who the old lady is who will be coming out of the Pop Shop any moment." Dutifully, I kept quiet and within a few minutes the old lady in question, came out. She had a shawl over her head and was dabbing her eyes and clutching a poorly wrapped parcel in the other hand. "I know her," I whispered to Charlie, "that's Mrs Rose, she lives on the entry side of Hoppers Yard in our street. What's she crying for?" "Never you mind, lad, just you come and see me next Friday night round about six o'clock." For once, when Charlie left me, he wasn't smiling but with a thoughtful look in his eyes.

Come Friday evening, I nipped over the brick wall that divided Beverley Street's back yards from ours, out along the entry, round the back of another, and I was soon knocking on Charlie's back door. "That you, lad," he called, "door's open and don't forget to wipe your feet before you come in." I carefully did as directed, pushed open the living room door and found him in his armchair with feet up and pipe going full blast! "Pull up a chair young 'un, but before you do, get me a couple of plates and that dish of butter from the cupboard - the salt and a knife and fork each while you're at it". Having done that, I sat down wondering what we were going to have. There was only Charlie and myself, so I came in somewhere.

"There's some big taters in the oven that should be ready pretty soon now," Charlie enlightened me, "I don't suppose you like roast potatoes with butter?" Not much I didn't. My taste buds started working overtime again. Charlie's oven was like ours, oven and hob on one side the fireplace and the hot water boiler on the other, all shiney black-leaded and gleaming brass nobs on either side. It was nice and cosy sitting there. Charlie lived on his own, his wife, a jolly woman, had died about two years ago. I'd followed Bamford's hearse to the General Cemetery when they buried her. My mam and dad went with him in the one coach that followed.

"Now, young 'un, day dreaming are you?" quizzed Charlie, breaking into my thoughts. "How about this Mrs Rose, what do you know about her?" I was a little curious as to why Charlie was asking me all this, but knowing him as I did I knew he had good reason for doing so, so I told him about not seeing her chimney smoking much and how I'd not been asked in lately - also how she sometimes seemed to be avoiding people. When I'd finished telling him, Charlie sat in silence for a while and I could see he

was doing quite a bit of thinking. "It's all right my lad, I've not forgot those taters, reckon they're just about done now." With that he picked up the cloth hanging over his chair-arm, twisted open the oven and with a 'yes, they're done a treat' dropped one on each waiting plate. A neat slice along the length of them and they were ready for the salt and butter. "Get busy lad," said Charlie, "put plenty of butter on." You don't waste time talking when there's such grub on the table, you just get stuck in while they're hot. Anyhow, when we had finished, Charlie passed me the cloth to wipe away the traces of butter from my mouth, made a cup of cocoa apiece, then got comfortable again. "Lad," he suddenly said, "I want you to do something for me, mind you, you musn't breathe a word of it to anyone - not even to your parents or friends. It's to be a secret between you and me." "Reserves Honour, Mr Sanders," I said. I was in the Boys' Brigade Reserves at the time and that was my most binding promise.

"Tomorrow morning will be the best time," went on Charlie. "Yes, that's it, the jumble sale at the Coppice Road Emmanuel Hall. Most of the women round about will be there and the coast will be clear to get them parcels in." "What parcels, Mr Sanders?" I asked. "There's two brown paper parcels in my front room. I'll clean my barrow out and you can use that to take them in." With that, Charlie took me into the parlour and explained more of what he wanted me to do. "Here you are," he said, giving me two - two shilling pieces, "that should cover the cost of the two hundred weight of coal. Now you had better get off home or your mother will be wondering where you've got to." As I nipped back over the wall again I was wondering about those two parcels, one was heavy and about the size of a Meadow Dairy margarine box, and the other felt like clothes all wrapped up.

Christmas fell on the following Thursday, and it did flash through my mind that all being well, Mrs Rose would be warmer

at least over Christmas. Like Charlie said, most of the women did go to the jumble sale and I got my job done with no-one seeming to notice. I'd made sure Mrs Rose was out also and nipped round over the wall for the barrow that was ready for me, and the two parcels were in Mrs Rose's scullery in no time. (Doors were rarely locked in the day time) As I recall, it was just knock and walk in. Anyway, our front door key fitted her back door so there would have been a way out in any case. The coal was no problem, two up's and two down's with Mrs Smith's three-wheeled barrow and two hundred weight of Gedling's Best Hazel Seam were safely in the cellar. I felt quite proud of myself as I went down the street with Charlie's barrow again. I was so chuffed with myself that I nearly banged into Charlie has he stood against Ma Duffty's beer-off. "Right my lad, I'll take the barrow. You've made a real good job of it, I won't forget you. I'm off to the garden now for an hour - ta-rah young 'un."

It didn't snow that Christmas, but Mrs Rose's chimney was smoking more than it had done of late. I think she must have been looking out for me because Boxing Day morning I was passing her house when she called me in for a cup of cocoa. We had a few biscuits and she gave me a copper penny. I noticed she was dressed a bit different; she had a very nice bluey grey lace blouse on, pearl buttons up the front and a ring of all frills round the neck. She'd also got a different apron on too, and that was also frilly edged. What I liked best was her smile, she seemed really happy, just like she used to be.

Come January, Mrs Rose had left. My mam said a lady and gentleman in a car had called and Mrs Rose had gone back with them. A van came the next day and took away her bits and pieces. I don't know where she went, but I'd like to think that she'd found a happy home.

By the way, I got my sleigh runners from the blacksmith. I went up to tell him that I couldn't fetch them yet and he just said "That's all right my lad, it's a Christmas Box for you, I've polished them up and they are all ready to fix on. You had better get them on quick by the looks of that sky, there's some snow hanging about." He turned away then and started banging away at a horse shoe on the anvil. Seemed as though he didn't want me to say anything. It did snow the next day, piles of it, and I did race the boot repair's boy, but I didn't beat him. I think his sleigh was a bit heavier, but I still like my own best.

It was well into November and I was pushing my barrow up the Wells Road towards the gardens again. This time I had half a barrow of coal slack and barely half a bucket of hoss muck. I'd struck a bad patch as regards the latter, evidently someone had beat me to it on that particular Saturday morning.

Still, I knew I'd get a copper or two off my dad for taking the slack up for his greenhouse fire and there was a faint chance that I would fill the manure bucket and so collect the usual threepenny piece from Charlie Sanders. Fortune smiled on me in the shape of two shire horses that turned into Taylors Farm just before I reached the garden avenues. A well patted down bucket and my threepenny piece was a certainty. Christmas wasn't far off and with a bit of luck we could have some snow. My elder brother had made me another sleigh but anyway, it was a pretty fair morning, a bit on the cold side but the sun managed to come through.

The gate of Charlie's garden was slightly ajar when I got there - I thought Good, I can take in the hoss muck and then carry on to my dads garden with the slack. Charlie was up that big Blenheim tree when I got into the garden, he was sawing away with one hand and clinging to the ladder with the other. I dropped my bucket near by and watched the silence until the saw bit through till the branch fell to the ground. Then Charlie tipped, tipped up the cap on his forehead, wiped his brow with a large coloured handkerchief. "Hello, young 'un," he called, "I'll be with you in a minute, I've just to put a dob of paint on here and I'll be down." A liberal dab out of the can that was hooked to the rungs and then he descended. "That's not a bad bucketful, young un, look after it," he said, as he gave over a threepenny bit he'd fished from his waistcoat pocket. I took out my rather grubby hanky and carefully knotted the bit into one corner before stuffing it just as carefully in the pocket of my breeches. "What have you

cut that off for, Mr Sanders?" as I idly kicked at the fallen branch, "there would have been some good apples on there, next year." "Ah, my lad," Charlie replied, "there would have been some apples, but not good ones. That particular branch plus others I've yet to cut, have been overgrown by larger branches. What fruit did set on them would be smothered by masses of foliage which would keep the light and air out plus provide a breeding place for the likes of pests and disease in creation. Plenty of light and good clean air, that's what you need for any kind of fruit. Now what would you look like my lad if you had to live in that dark coal cellar of yours? You'd be a right pale and poorly object I'll be bound. Sun and fresh air puts colour into apples just as it does in your cheeks!"

Charlie's logic was so simple that some of it must have got home to me. My curiosity was still aroused however, so before he could expound any further, I asked him what why he put the paint on the stump for. "What do you put a bandage on your cut finger for? - you keep it clean and free from infection, right? Now we cannot bandage trees, so we do the next best thing and that's dabbing some good lead paint on so it doesn't get affected by frost and other harsh weather. The cut would be protected and prevent a canker to spread into the stump. By the way, I'll tell you before you ask, what I am going to do with that bucket of lime there. Well, it's freshly slaked lump lime, and when I've finished pruning, I'm going to brush it all over the trunk right up to where the branches start, and before you ask, it's to kill any insect that might be hiding in the rough bark. Now young 'un, do you think you'll remember some of what I've told you? - you may have a garden of your own one day."

Charlie began to move towards his summer house but not before he gave me a couple of apples. I nearly decimated one half way up the avenue carrying my father's slack.

A party was annually given by the organisors of the Pearson's Fresh Air Fund for the poorer children of the district. I only attended one and must admit that even at that, I was a gate crasher. It happened like this. On a day very much when I was at a loose end, I decided to go on the Woodthorpe Grange having thought about the Clay Mounts often. I made my way via Coppice Road over Woodborough Road exploring the brickyard pond on the way. Entering the park at the Sherwood Vale end I then made my way up the brief incline to the main road. On a flat part just before the greenhouse section I saw several tables surrounded by a large number of children with nearby, a banner advertising the Fund. I stood by a tree on the road envying those lucky kids. Then finally decided, that one more or less wouldn't make a great deal of difference to anyone. With few qualms, I infiltrated. It was a smashing party, sandwiches and cakes galore followed by big bags of sweets. There was even a tram to take us back to Sneinton and from there, it wasn't far back to St Anns Well Road. Yes, a grand party, but I still found room for a late tea when I got home.

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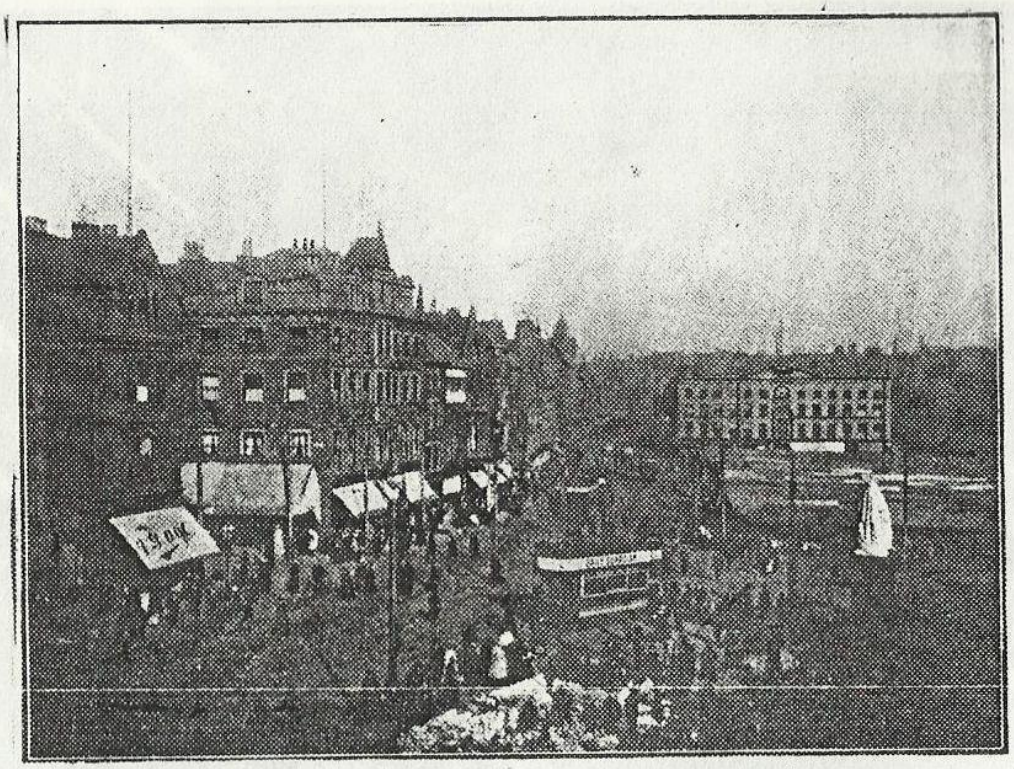
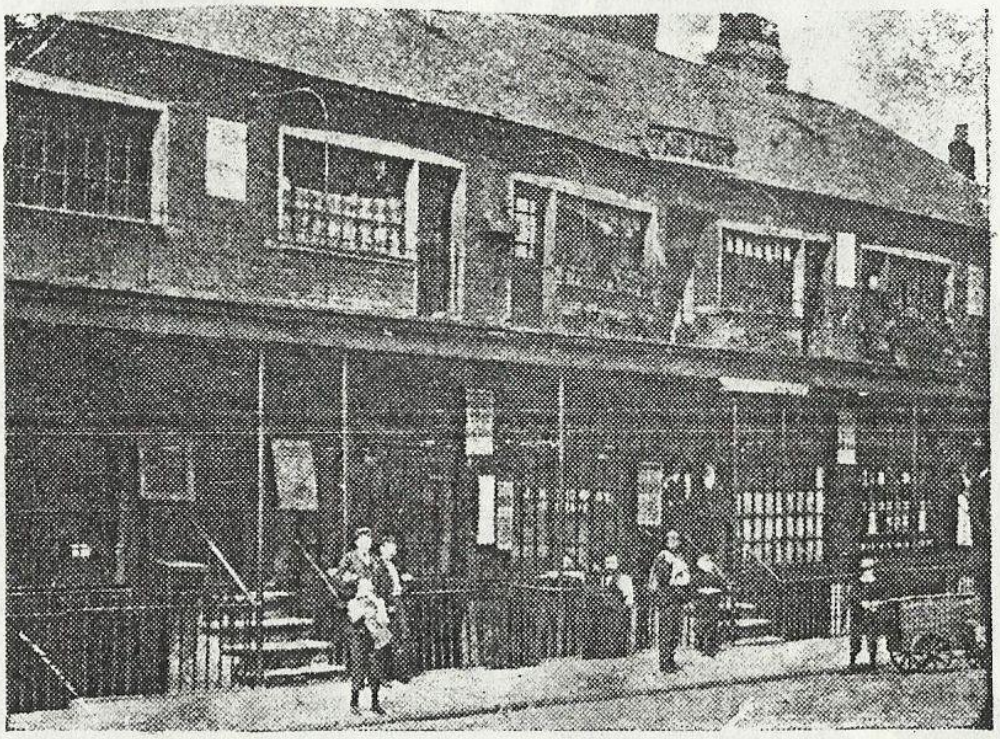
The Sir Roland Hill, was a pub and one of many in the St Anns Well Road area. It stood on the Hungerhill Road on the top left of Norland Road. Although his dad didn't use the pub I was meant to be in that Cross Country Race. It had been organised by the landlord and his customers offering a first prize of a new suit. I wanted that suit. The race for us lads stretched a course along Hunger Hill Road up the Coppice Road, along the plains at the top, down the Wells Road, back up the Coppice Road and onto the Hunger Hill Road again finishing post being at the Sir Roland. There was quite a crowd, lots of mothers evident to cheer there sons on. The flag went down and all pelted away in great style but when they came upon the Coppice Road, the

casualties began to happen. First one, then another, but with that suit in mind, I pressed on. Down the conker tree-lined road I passed quite a few of the runners but I had a few doubts about winning when I came onto the Coppice Road. It was then I realised that there were about a dozen or more in front of me and despite my spurt I came in around twenty two place. The lads were all cheered in and patted on the back and every last one of them had a prize of some other. My prize was a boy's annual, one of my school pals collared the suit. After the prize giving, we had a good tuck in!



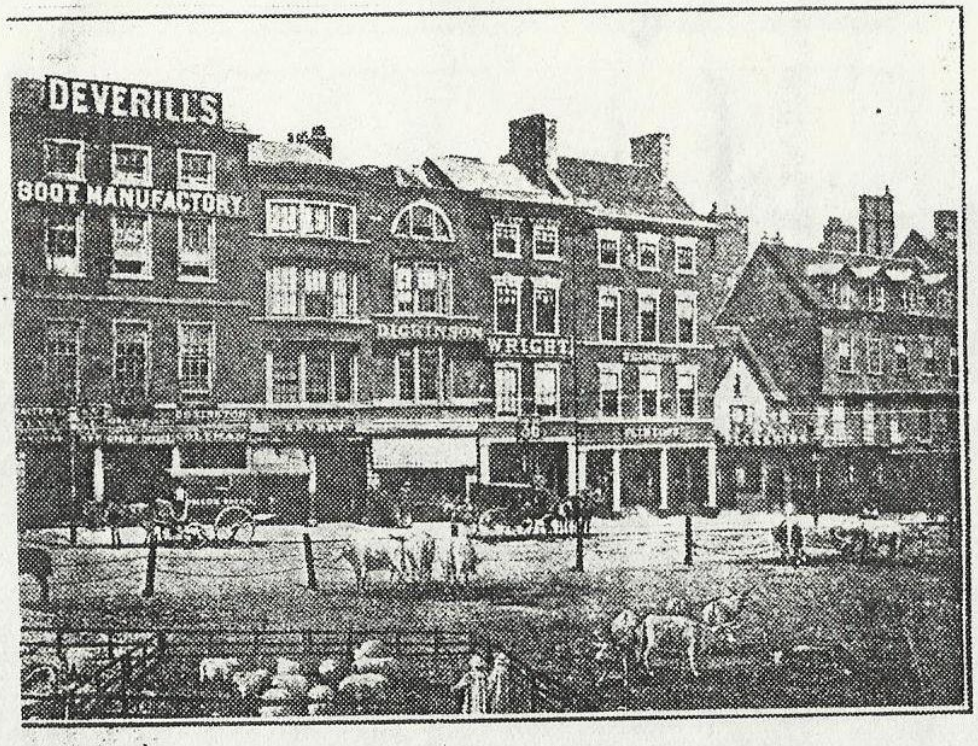
GREAT MARKET PLACE, NOTTINGHAM.



THE TRADESMEN'S MART, PARLIAMENT STREET.

Quaint old houses on the "flat" system, demolished 1900.

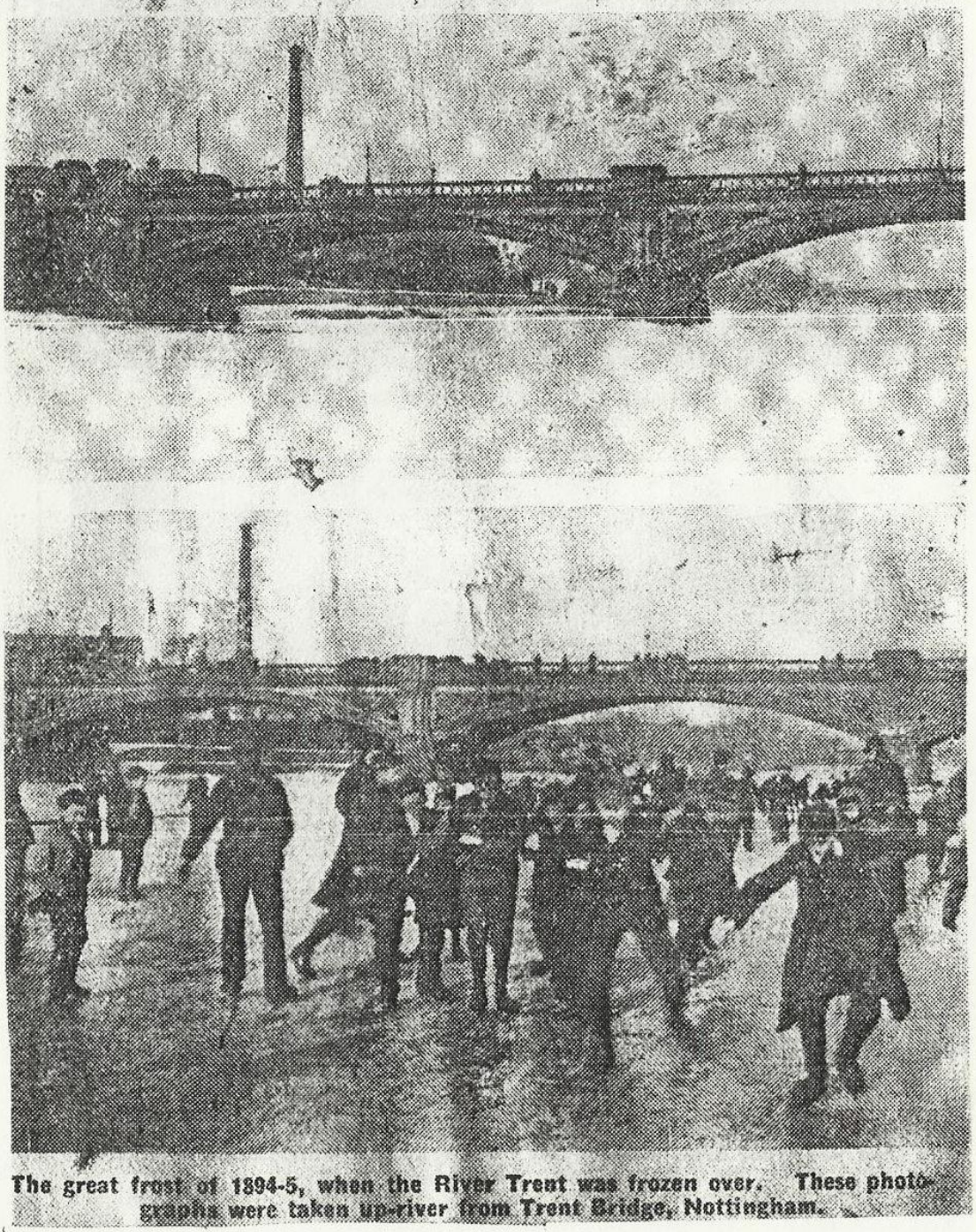
MAPPERLEY PLAINS. NOTTINGHAM



LONG ROW

As it appeared in the middle of the 19th century when the Wednesday Cattle Market was held in the Great Market Place. Nearly all the old houses on the Row have now been rebuilt.

WHEN THE TRENT WAS A SKATING RINK



The great frost of 1894-5, when the River Trent was frozen over. These photographs were taken up-river from Trent Bridge, Nottingham.

END OF AN ERA

STYLUS - ISBN 1 85620 120 1

"It was 1917, we slept four in a bed, two up and two down with a candlestick on a chair. But we all leapt out of bed when we heard that the German Zeppelin was over us. There was an entry to every six to eight dwellings up the street with one gas lamp at the top, one in the middle, and one at the bottom. Kids would play chuck, skimmings and marbles along the granite cobble stones or follow the open top trams. It was a hard struggle at times with many pawnshops of misery.

Donkey Hill, known in those days, was the fastest sledge run also an escape to greener pastures when the snow wasn't down.

In the back yards of the St Anns District, friendship was forged around a solid anvil of strength and belonging. Scooping up 'hoss muck' or bits of stray coal between horse-drawn vehicles and hawkers, was a way of life for the author.

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