West End Memories

1952 AND ALL THAT

St James' Heritage & Environment Group
West End Local History Series

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Images
Courtesy of West Newcastle Picture History Collection, Newcastle City Libraries, Les Turnbull, Mike Greatbatch, Josephine Briggs, Richard Rook, ncjmedia, and project participants' personal collections.

Cover images: These images are taken from a batik flag depicting the 1950s. It is the first of a series of seven flags, each focusing on a different decade of the Queen's reign, created by artist Rowan Taylor working with the local community in collaboration with Pendower Good Neighbour Project. It was funded by the Arts Council Let's Create Jubilee Fund.

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St James' Heritage & Environment Group is an independent volunteer-run organisation and registered charity providing activities and resources for people of all ages to explore and celebrate the history of the west end of Newcastle.

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INTRODUCTION

This book is the result of a project to mark the occasion of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. It contains a collection of photographs, stories and memories giving a varied picture of life in the west end of Newcastle 70 years ago. The Second World War still cast a shadow over people's lives, and poor housing conditions, ill health and inequality were widespread. This was also a time of great changes, such as the plans to create thousands of new homes and the advent of a National Health Service with its promise of free healthcare for all. But the picture presented here is not so much about big ideas and events, it is about the many local experiences and activities that combined to make up the fabric of everyday life in the 1950s.

In 1952 the town cheered Newcastle United football team when they returned home after their victory in the FA Cup Final. During the 1950s the club won the FA Cup three times in five years.

In 1952 Violet Grantham, a resident of Fenham, became Mayor of Newcastle - the first woman ever to hold this position.

Zebra crossings had just been introduced in the UK in 1952. One of Newcastle's first zebra crossings was in Marlborough Crescent. The bus station can be seen on the left.

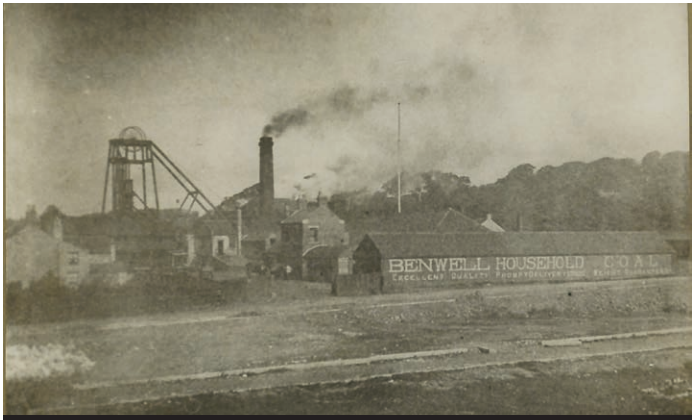
Linda Sutton – A 1952 Baby

Linda pictured in the bath tub in the kitchen. The old kitchen range had been taken out and a new fire installed in preparation for the new baby. Ranges remained a feature of many local houses for years to come.

I was born at home in Pendower Way in January 1952. My christening took place in St James' Church just before King George's funeral, and I remember being told (later!) that the interior of the church was draped in black.

My parents were Billy and Olive who both served during the war. When I was born he was driving trolley buses. My father was the youngest of his brothers to get married, probably because of the war.

Linda and her father in the garden of their Pendower home.



The Charlotte Pit on Condercum Road was the last pit to close in Benwell.

By 1952 there were no working pits left in Benwell, but the legacy of coal mining cast a shadow over the lives of many local people. The Charlotte Pit, which had shut just over a decade earlier, had claimed the lives of two members of Linda's family. Her grandfather Frank Scott, a deputy overman at the pit, was killed in 1936 just two years before it closed. His son Adam had been killed six years previously. Another son Frank Jnr had been injured a year earlier in an accident at the nearby Montagu Pit, and was unable to work as a result.

Linda's grandparents, Frank and Hannah Scott, are pictured here at the wedding of their son John in 1935.

GLIMPSES OF 1950S

The bridge that crossed the Tyne at Scotswood was known as the Chain Bridge because it hung on chains from two stone towers. This was the bridge referenced in the song "Blaydon Races". By 1952 it was already a hundred years old. It survived for another 15 years before being demolished and replaced by the current Scotswood Bridge.

Clara Street in Benwell was typical of the long terraces running down from Adelaide Terrace to Scotswood Road. The streets became steeper further down the slopes. These were to be demolished in the 1970s as part of a massive slum clearance programme. Dunston Power Station can be seen across the river.

SHOPS

In 1952 Benwell had three main shopping streets running east to west across the steep terraces – Scotswood Road in the south, the West Road to the north, and Adelaide Terrace which ran through the heart of the area.

Gloucester Street Co-op was one of many large Co-op stores around the west end, serving groceries, fresh meat, and a variety of other provisions. Everyone knew their "divi" number in those days.

There were also dozens of small shops in the terraces and on street corners, such as this one on the junction of Scotswood Road and Water Street.

These shop premises in Elm Street, Benwell, were already scheduled for demolition in 1952.

Pamela Ingham's Memories of Elswick

Pamela shared the small bedroom with her older sister Linda

I was born in Gloucester Road, Elswick, 74 years ago, having been delivered by the local midwife who charged my mother half a crown for her services. We lived in a downstairs flat with kitchen, two bedrooms, a scullery, no hot water, a coal fire, gas lamps for light, a tin bath for Friday bath nights and an outside toilet. Our dad worked in Walker naval yard and our mam was a sewing machinist working for George Angus behind Woolworth's in Clayton Street, Newcastle, where she made protective clothing for firemen and factory workers. We lived in the street alongside grandparents, aunties, uncles and cousins, and I still remember today the numbers of the doors where they all lived. Family life was very much centred around the extended family and the local church.

We started school on our fifth birthdays, and most of us went to Westgate Hill Primary School. I remember playtimes in the yards where girls and boys played separately, horrible outside toilets, and the awful warm bottle of milk at break time. Our teacher would bring items from the countryside to show us, and I was particularly taken with the flowers on a branch of pussy willow which I'd never seen before. I remember my days at Westgate Hill School as being really happy – days where we just enjoyed being kids.

Every morning as we got ready for school we would feel the room shake as the tanks built at the Armstrong's factory would make their way up the street to be tried out at Fenham Barracks. We would usually be eating tea when the house would shake again on their return to the factory.

As children in the fifties we had no phone, no telly, no cars. We didn't really travel far. We bought our groceries at the local shops, mainly the Co-op where there were delicious smells that have stayed with us throughout our lives. You could buy small amounts of food such as butter, tea, coffee.

The shop assistants would slice meat on a big machine. You had to queue, and everyone was so polite. Our threepenny bit pocket money would be spent with the aid of our ration book at the local paper shop, and we would get so much for our money – four fruit salad chews, one pennyworth rainbow drops (a massive packet), a gobstopper that lasted for days, and a bubble gum. Sometimes I'd go to Woolworth's in Benwell and spend some of my pocket money on a notebook and pencil. These were great days.

On Saturdays my mam would send me to Benwell sometimes on the bus with a bowl to get mushy peas from the pie shop, and we'd have them with homemade pie. That same bowl would be used as a treat when the ice cream man came into the street. For a shilling he'd fill the bowl and pour over "monkey's blood". Yummy.

On Sundays, the quayside market was a favourite destination for the family after church and a traditional Sunday dinner

I remember those days of the 1950s as always being sunny, playful, and loving, but now as an adult I realise that for most adults in the street we were living very much in the shadow of the Second World War and its aftermath. Rationing was still going on, and men and women back from the traumas of the war were having to come to terms with all that they had experienced. Four of my uncles had been part of the D Day landings. They had lost friends and witnessed many horrific scenes, and one took to the bottle to hide his anxiety. Two cousins married Polish brothers who had escaped terrible punishments in concentration camps, and for years sent food and clothing parcels back to Poland after the war. My friend's father would often be found terrified out of his wits in the cupboard under the stairs, crying, as he remembered his time being tortured as a Japanese prisoner of war. A German woman in the street suffered terrible abuse. A neighbour had terrible shell shock, and would cower in doorways whenever a car backfired. As children we were somehow shielded from all that had happened during the war. We were aware of bombed out buildings and people with disabilities, but I never realised how much my relatives, neighbours or the families of my Jewish friends must have suffered during those war years and its after-effects.

A HOUSING CRISIS

"Is the Minister aware that Newcastle-upon-Tyne has one of the worst housing records in the country?"
(question asked in Parliament by local MP Ted Short, 1951)

In 1952 most of the housing in West Newcastle, from Elswick west to Newburn and north to Arthurs Hill, comprised long terraces of mainly Tyneside flats built before the First World War. These areas were densely built, with little green space. The period between the wars had seen further housing development, with the area's first council estates as well as the growth of housing for owner occupation.

By the start of the 1950s, the shortage of suitable housing was a big issue in Newcastle. Some 16,000 families were awaiting rehousing. There had been little new housebuilding in recent years, and many homes were of very poor quality. Overcrowding was rife. Large numbers of properties across the west end had been declared unfit years earlier, but the war had brought a halt to plans for major slum clearance and new housebuilding. Many unfit homes remained occupied because of the serious housing shortage. Almost a thousand families were waiting to be rehoused from houses which had been condemned more than a decade previously. By 1952 the situation was acute.

Many homes, such as these in Elswick East Terrace , had been condemned as unfit before the Second World War, but were still inhabited 20 years later.

This row of houses in South Benwell Road was one of those demolished in the early 1950s in an effort to clear some of the area's worst slums.

As late as 1952 many people still lived in tenements without basic amenities such as running water.

"More houses mean less disease"

"The conditions under which many inhabitants of the City are compelled to exist are not conducive to the maintenance of good health or to the basis of a good family life. A proportion of illness in the City is certainly associated with over-crowding and bad housing conditions... The City has a very long way to go before the living conditions of many of the inhabitants can be brought up to what might be termed ordinary reasonable English health standards of the mid-twentieth century....

We find that of every 100 households in the City 38 do not possess a separate bath, that 18 are without separate water closet and 17 have no direct piped water supply. There were in 1951 approximately 87,800 households with 281,100 persons occupying 318,800 rooms giving a proportion of 0.88 persons per room throughout the City. This figure is one of the highest recorded for any area in England and Wales."

Extract from report of Newcastle's Medical Officer of Health for 1952.

HOMES

This photograph depicts Two Ball Lonnen, looking south to the junction with Netherby Drive. In the years between the two wars, several council estates had been built in the west end, notably in Scotswood and Fenham. These homes had inside toilets, adequate plumbing and gardens – a considerable improvement on many of the old terraces. In 1952 more council estates were being built or were at the planning stage in places such as West Denton and Slatyford.

There had also been a considerable amount of new private housing development during the interwar years. Estates such as Condercum Park, pictured here, offered good quality accommodation with generous gardens front and back – and, in this case, a genuine Roman temple on your doorstep.

Among the unfit properties still waiting to be demolished in 1952 were those on Noble Street in Benwell. These had been condemned before the war. The first picture shows the demolition of the old terraced homes, and the second shows their replacements being built in 1956-7. The new Noble Street flats, intended to provide accommodation for large numbers of families at relatively low cost, were of such poor quality and design that they had to be demolished only 20 years later.

This photograph looking south towards Kenton Bar from Kenton Bank Top illustrates how there were still large areas of undeveloped land to the north of the West Road and west of Fenham. To the west of the boundary of Newcastle, which ran just west of Denton Dene, much of the area was still semi-rural, mainly in use for farming or coalmining, with green fields separating the communities of Bell's Close, Lemington and Newburn.

Catherine Tumelty's Memories of Lemington and Bell's Close

I was five years old when King George VI died on 6th February 1952. I was in the reception class at St George's Catholic School which was right next to the church in Bell's Close. I remember all the pupils in school marching down to the church for a short service to say prayers for King George and also for the new Queen Elizabeth II, and vividly remember singing for the very first time "God Save Our Gracious Queen".

There were very few houses in Bell's Close itself. There was a corner shop, a petrol station and a Wesleyan Methodist Church. Holy Saviour, the Church of England church, was in Sugley between Bell's Close and Lemington. Bell's Close was bordered by a dene to the west, a railway line to the north and the Tyne to the south. We had to cross a bridge over the railway line to get to Bell's Close.

Catherine's mother loved making kilts for her to wear.

Although I went to school and church in Bell's Close, I lived in Lemington. I remember having a very happy childhood in Lemington where everyone seemed to know everyone else. Dad was the breadwinner and Mam never worked but always had the most delicious meals ready for us. Dad was able to mend most mechanical things. He could repair the soles of leather shoes using his shoe last. He even built our first television in a large wooden box with huge valves, a small screen and a large magnifying glass in front of it. The live picture came through in green and white instead of black and white, and we used to think we had the first colour television.

Catherine lived at 4 Bewick Crescent in Lemington with her parents, four brothers and a sister. Their street was next to Union Hall Road which was long and steep. This was ideal for sledging in the winter.

We had no home telephone but used the public telephone a few streets away. The corner shop allowed us to use their phone in an emergency either to receive urgent messages or to call for a doctor.

There were lots of children around then – five in our house, six next door, and five in the next house. There were very few cars in the fifties, and so as children we played in the streets and all the children joined in games like hopscotch, skipping, tennis, piggy in the middle, kick the can, Simon Says, and Knocky Nine Doors (much to the annoyance of our parents). We would pack a picnic and take it to the Panniards with friends, and we could play there all day – running through the bluebells, making daisy chains, collecting buttercups, balancing on stones and playing ball – as long as we were home by our strictly allotted time.

We always attended church on a Sunday morning but in the afternoon, on a fine day, the whole family would walk on a circular route along the dene, through the Panniards, across the Denton Burn and return via a farm into Bell's Close and back to Lemington. For days out we used to take the steam train from Lemington Station up to Ryton Willows, or go in the opposite direction to Newcastle Central Station and pick up the coast train to Whitley Bay, where we would meet up with relatives from around the area.

This farm and the Panniards lay to the north of Bell's Close. They disappeared when Dumpling Hall Estate was built.

SCHOOLS

The 1950s saw a big increase in pupil numbers across west end schools, as a result of the baby boom at the end of the war. It was not unusual to have as many as 50 children in a class. At this time, most local schools were Elementary Schools, with separate Infant, Junior and Senior departments. Pupils often stayed on the same site throughout their education from reception class to leaving school. Some sites also housed other schools, such as the technical school at Atkinson Road or the commercial school at Pendower. Atkinson Road School provided a range of evening classes which, for many people, were the route to improving their employment opportunities in that period. This ended in the 1960s when Newcastle College acquired a site in Rye Hill to develop further education.

In 1952 most of the schools in Elswick, Benwell and Scotswood were imposing Victorian structures, built during the years following the introduction of a series of Education Acts making the provision of school places compulsory. One exception was Broadwood School, opened in 1952 on a site just west of Denton Dene. It served the population of Denton Burn which had grown rapidly in the years between the wars as a result of large-scale housing development. The modern design, featuring a clock tower, contrasted sharply with that of nearby Denton Road School, pictured below, built in 1908 to serve Scotswood village.

GLIMPSES OF 1950S

During the 1950s, the West Road would often flood at Denton Burn. A bridge carried the road over a stream which flowed down through the dene to the Tyne below here. Heavy rain would cause the stream to burst its banks causing flooding. This picture looks east towards Newcastle. The Denton Hotel can be seen in the distance, with the newly built Silver Lonnen to its left.

The back yards of the terraced houses opened onto back lanes. These were a focal point of community life where children played and adults socialised. This would be disrupted from time to time by delivery vehicles and dustcarts.

BUSES

By 1952 the trolleybus and motor bus had taken over from the trams as the means of public transport in Newcastle. 1951 had seen the end of the tram era, and the metal tram lines were being dug up along Elswlck Road and other main roads. In the 1950s, most of Newcastle's bus services were operated by the Newcastle Corporation Transport and Electricity Undertaking from a head office at Manors. There were three local bus depots including the Wingrove depot on Westgate Road, which was replaced in 1956 by the Slatyford depot.

Motor buses had first come on the scene in 1912, operating on a service from Fenham Barracks to Westerhope. Bus services expanded rapidly from 1920 onwards, replacing trams on the Spital Tongues, Westmorland Road and other routes. By 1952 there were 261 motor buses, most of which were double-deckers with rear platforms. In addition to the Corporation bus services, there were others such as United Automobile Services which ran buses out west to Throckley, Heddon and other places, and United, Northern General Transport, and Venture Transport which ran services along the Scotswood Road to places like Chopwell, Consett and Prudhoe. These other companies operated out of Marlborough Crescent Bus Station, where the Centre for Life is located now. Pictured below (left) is a typical motor bus of the 1950s, seen here on Bentinck Road.

The first trolleybuses had been introduced in Newcastle in 1935, replacing trams on the Westgate to Wallsend route. New routes were opened over the following years until by 1952 there were 204 trolleybuses in service across the city. Trolley buses were powered by electricity from overhead wires. Unlike trams, they did not run on tracks. Trolleybuses ran on Elswick Road, Benwell Lane and Whickham View terminating at the junction of Denton Road, and through Fenham along Fenham Hall Drive and Barrack Road. The trolleybuses were in their turn to disappear from the streets of Newcastle during the 1960s.

Above: One of the last batch of trolley buses delivered to Newcastle Corporation Transport in 1950.

TRAINS

In 1952 a train service linked the west end with the town. The Newcastle-Carlisle Railway ran along the north bank of the Tyne as far as Scotswood, and a connecting loop then passed through Lemington and Newburn to Wylam. There were stations at Elswick, Scotswood, Lemington and Newburn, but all were to close by 1967.

Scotswood station, pictured here in 1950, was on the east side of Scotswood village. There was a house for the stationmaster. The station closed in 1967 when the railway line was moved south of the river.

This train is travelling between Newburn and Lemington on the Scotswood-Wylam branch line in 1956. The Hadrian's footpath and cycleway runs along the track-bed today. In the background the pit heap belonging to Walbottle Colliery's Percy Pit can be seen - one of few features then remaining of a once-dominant local industry.

Pat Young's Memories of Benwell

I was born in November 1946, just after the end of the Second World War. We lived in an upstairs flat at Number 6 Bond Street.

At the top of the street was a public swimming baths where folk could also go and have a bath or do their washing. As children we used to go swimming on a regular basis. There was a corner shop opposite the baths called "Gippies" belonging to Mr Gibson, and he used to let me and my sister choose our own pick and mix from the front window. We thought we were very special to be allowed to do this. At the bottom of the street was a fish and chip shop where we could get free chips if we took in some used newspapers.

At that time you could get anything on Adelaide Terrace from furniture to children's clothes and shoes. Storey's hardware shop on the corner of Clara Street and Adelaide Terrace had everything you could possibly want. It was like the "Open all hours" shop on telly. Mr Storey could put his hands on everything you asked for, and it was all stored in little boxes and drawers around the back of his counter – nails, screws, candles, light bulbs, gardening tools, firewood, paraffin etc. The ceiling was covered in hooks hanging everything from watering cans to brooms and coal scuttles. On the corner of Bond Street and Adelaide Terrace was a baker's shop called Campbell's. They made tiny little loaves which we thought were great. Our bread was wrapped in flimsy tissue paper which never used to arrive home intact. We loved to chew the corners of the bread one by one while waiting for Mam to do the rest of her shopping. Around the corner on Benwell Lane where Lidl is now there was an old quarry where we buried our budgie in an old shoe box.

Woolworth's store can be seen on the left of this photograph of Adelaide Terrace. This building had been a cinema called The Adelaide, which closed in 1943.

Canning Street School is still open, but the original Victorian building here no longer stands.

At five years old I was sent to Canning Street Infant School just up the road from our house. I remember my first day when the bell went for playtime. I thought it was home time, so I happily walked down the street to see my Mam. Thankfully she was at home as Mothers didn't go out to work in those days. She immediately marched me back to school where she told me I had to stay until she came back for me at lunchtime. We always went home for lunch and had to go back to school in the afternoon. Then Mam would be standing at the railings to take us home.

Everything was still on rations for a few years after the war, so we didn't get many luxuries like sweets. Mam used to buy some marshmallow type sweets called flumps as they weighed lighter than other sweets, and she kept them in a top cupboard in an alcove in the living room and every morning she would climb on a chair to reach them. We were given one sweet each to go to school with and that was our ration for the day. Occasionally Mam would make us some home-made "sherbet" – her version was cocoa powder mixed with sugar – that we dipped our finger in.

The staff of Canning Street School are pictured here in 1951.

My Grandad lived with us in the early years but he had TB and eventually died. I can remember Mam used to take me and my sister to the hospital every year for about five years for a TB test where we had some jelly substance rubbed into the back of our neck, then covered with a sticking plaster. We would each be given a sweet for being good. As long as there was no reaction we knew we were in the clear.

CHURCHES

In the 1950s, churchgoing was more popular than today, and there were dozens of churches across the west end. Most of these dated from before the First World War, but there were some recent exceptions.

The period between the wars had seen extensive house-building across Fenham. Land had been bought in 1930 to build a new Roman Catholic Church, but it was not until 1955 that St Robert's RC Church in Cedar Road, pictured here, was finally completed. It was dedicated to St Robert of Newminster in deference to the Ord family who had previously owned the land at Fenham and also owned the Newminster estate at Morpeth.

St Columba's Church, pictured here, had opened in 1899 in School Street, in the newly built area of South Benwell. Still a flourishing church in the 1950s, it was to disappear in the mass housing clearances of the 1970s.

GLIMPSES OF 1950S

This postcard dates from the 1950s. At this time, Denton Dene marked the boundary of Newcastle. The riverside villages of Newburn, Lemington and Bell's Close had their own council with offices in Newburn. It was not until 1974 that these areas were incorporated into the city.

During the 1950s, church attendance was still widespread, and for many people, church activities were at the heart of their social life too. This is a picture of a Mothers Union outing from St Mary's Church, Throckley.

Michael Young's Memories of Fenham and Arthur's Hill

Michael Young and Keith Bottomley on a wall at the corner of Hall Road and Hadrian Road, photographed by Miss Page, a piano teacher.

We lived in a small flat on Severus Road with six of us crammed into a nice terraced house, then moved to Brighton Grove closer to the church.

I attended Westgate Road Baptist Church where Dad was a treasurer. Church in the morning, Sunday School in the afternoon – obligatory. Obliged to listen to the Palm Court Orchestra on the wireless, but next came the Sunday serial. This was often Dickens. To this day I can't remember whether I have read Dickens' books or heard them on the wireless. BBC was the only choice in those days. Baby-sitting for my sister and aged Nana in the evening.

I learned to ride on a fifth-hand bike. Then it was condemned, and I was forced to use my sister's bike. I was a laughing stock for riding a girl's bike. I got a job as a paper boy at Chipchase's newsagent – 10 shillings a week for morning and evening papers delivery on Stanton Street and Beaconsfield Street.

Here I am in Mr Jones' class at Wingrove Junior School. He was the best teacher I ever had. I am the blond with specs sitting on the wall. I wore glasses from an early age so was called speccy often. Later on in the fifties, as more and more people wore glasses because of the NHS, calling people speccy could be risky.

The "scholarship" was the popular name for the selection process for the various schools after the junior school. It was an exam, or possibly three exams if parents had ambitions for their children. Top of the tree was the Royal Grammar School, then Dame Allan's in Fenham. Then the council schools such as Rutherford Grammar or Pendower Commercial and Technical School, and then the Senior Schools. In 1953 I started Rutherford having failed to get into the posh schools. It was then on Corporation Street. Easy to walk if you didn't mind being called a college snob every so often. Long trousers, black blazer and black cap with the school badge (a spurious heraldic device). Embarrassing! The school moved to West Road about three or four years later – opened by the Queen Mother.

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID IN 1952

Among the stories covered by the local press in 1952, was the shock announcement that government had turned down Newcastle's plans for four new schools in Newcastle. Approval had been given to build a new Rutherford Grammar School for Boys on the West Road, but refused for a Rutherford High School for Girls. Meanwhile better news came with the results of a poll on Sunday cinema opening. Newcastle residents voted 2:1 in favour of opening cinemas on Sundays when they had previously been closed.

Newcastle Evening Chronicle *14 October 1952*

Newcastle Journal *19 January 1952*

MICHAEL'S DREAM CAME TRUE

SIXTEEN - YEAR - OLD Michael Connor, of Maple Street, Throckley, finished his work as a clerk on the Team Valley Trading Estate, last night, and so closed another chapter in his already varied life.

Next Friday he travels to London and, then, a few days later, as one of 40 boys selected by the "Big Brother" Youth Migration Movement, boards the steamer Ranchi for Australia.

But for Michael there will be nothing new about this trip as he has been out to Australia once already.

When his father died four years ago his mother decided to go to a sister out there. Unfortunately the climate did not agree with his mother, and they had to return after only ten months.

One ambition

And said his mother last night: Michael has had only one ambition since then, to get back to Australia.

With that in view he wrote to Australia House and when the reply came he found he was one of the lucky few selected to go as "Little Brothers."

In Australia he will go to the movement's training farm near Sydney before going on a farm to work.

His mother said last night that Michael likes to get "miles away from anywhere" and would be really happy if he could get on some isolated farm—especially if there were tractors or cars to tinker around with.

Though she will miss her son, his mother, who is now married again, is sure it will be for the best.

A feature in the Journal told the story of a 16 year old clerk from Throckley who was about to embark on a steamer bound for Australia to start a new life working on a farm. He had been selected as one of 40 boys by the "Big Brother" Youth Migration Movement.

PIT CLOSES—MEN TRANSFERRED

News of the impending closure of the Maria Pit in Throckley after 200 years of operation was an ominous sign of the future of coalmining locally. It was reported that the 120 men who worked there would be transferred to other pits, but there were few mining jobs left in the west end by this time.

"Cosh boy" play upsets parish

"INOPPORTUNE," SAYS BENWELL

RIVAL camps in St. James's Parish, Benwell, Newcastle, are up in arms because a church amateur theatrical company plans to stage a play in St. James's Church Hall which features a "cosh boy."

The play, "Front Page Girl," is to be presented next week by Benwell Players, a group attached to St. James's Church which has produced several murder mysteries in the past for church funds.

"DEPLORABLE" say the opponents of the play who consider this "a particularly inopportune time" for such a production and a church hall "a particularly inopportune place."

"BUNKUM," says Canon D. H. S. Mould, vicar of St. James's, by whose "kind permission" the play is being produced.

OBJECTION TO POSTERS

Centre of objection are posters advertising the play in a house next door to the church hall.

One of them reads: "Come and meet Johnny South, Cosh Boy."

The house, 16, Atkinson Terrace, is the home of the producer, Mr. C. Paul.

"WE ARE CASHING IN"

"We are cashing in on the cosh boy," Mr. Paul told the "Evening Chronicle."

"It is the first time this play has been staged in this part of the country and I am sure it is the first time a church has made money out of these worthless characters.

"It may be wrong to say this, but I believe that in view of the recent publicity given to cosh boys we are staging the play at the right time."

Mr. Paul said that the story has a "morality theme" with the cosh boy represented as an 18-year-old who had a bad home life and never knew the meaning of parental love.

"The story indicates the ruthlessness of the cosh boy—he murders a night watchman and crushes another man—but also shows that the law must win in the end," he said.

"CHEAP AND NASTY"

A parishioner said: "I am disgusted at the idea of such a play being produced in a church hall and think that the advance publicity is cheap and nasty."

Butted police constable in the face

Thomas Fyall (33), shop assistant, of 42, Worley Street, Newcastle, admitted at Newcastle today that he butted a policeman with his head in Worley Street, Newcastle, on Saturday and that he had been drunk and disorderly.

He was fined a total of £12 with £4 4s. costs.

Wife complained

Mr. D. E. Brown, who prosecuted, said that at 11.20 p.m. on Saturday, Constable McCarroll went to Fyall's house in Worley Street.

He found Fyall's wife in a distressed condition and the living room in a state of disorder, with crockery smashed and carpets turned back.

He saw Fyall in bed and told him his wife had made a complaint.

When the constable was leaving, Fyall caught hold of his greatcoat and butted him in the face.

Later he threw a large glass vase at the officer.

Duke is boxing Patron

The Duke of Edinburgh has become the Patron of the Amateur Boxing Association.

City man's estate

Mr. William Thompson, of 12, Hartside Gardens, Newcastle, who died in August, left £1,110 net personalty (£1,080).

s included

VE FOR SS ZONE"

Municipal Correspondent

urging the establishment of e centre of Newcastle was Committee when it met in

Baby found dead on day of christening

GRIEF-STRICKEN mother told the Coroner (Mr. J. Dodds) at a North Shields uest today how she awakened find her 28-day-old baby ghter dead in bed by her on the day on which the d was to have been istened.

he mother, Mrs. Elizabeth ligan, of Linskill Terrace, th Shields, was in tears as said that she took the baby bed with her when it cried did not go to sleep after a feed.

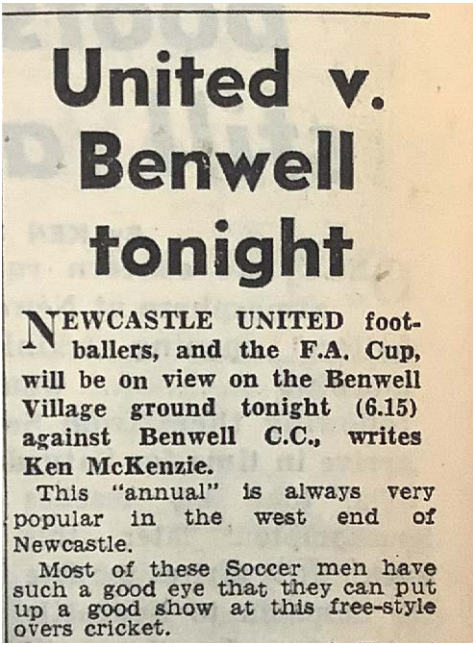
he gave the child another at 4.30 a.m. and when awoke at about 9.30 a.m. the rs were over the baby's face she was dead.

Medical evidence

David Leon said that he called on Sunday morning found the child had been for an hour or an hour a half. Death was due to yxia.

Dodds entered a verdict the child was "accidentally fixiated while in bed with mother."

Benwell came under the spotlight with reports of an outcry provoked by the St James' Players, an amateur group linked with St James' Church. Adverts for their new production Front Page Girl invited people to "Meet Johnny South, Cosh Boy". The term "cosh boy" had been coined earlier that year in the wake of a wages robbery in Liverpool by a gang one of whose members carried a cosh. This had become a symbol of the "seamier side of modern life" in the words of the Journal.



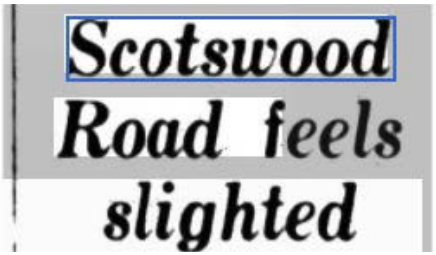
United v. Benwell tonight

NEWCASTLE UNITED footballers, and the F.A. Cup, will be on view on the Benwell Village ground tonight (6.15) against Benwell C.C., writes Ken McKenzie.

This "annual" is always very popular in the west end of Newcastle.

Most of these Soccer men have such a good eye that they can put up a good show at this free-style overs cricket.

There was happier news for Benwell in August 1952 when the papers reported on a forthcoming cricket match involving members of the cup-winning Newcastle Utd football team playing against Benwell Cricket Club.



Scotswood Road feels slighted

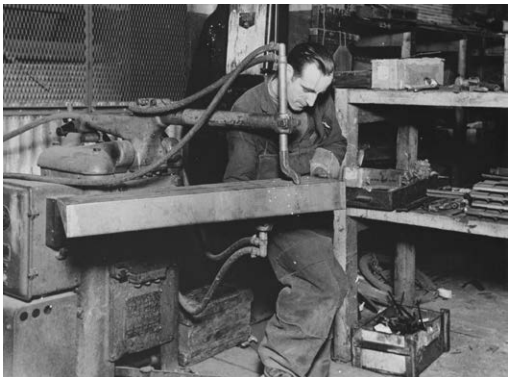
The year ended with angry complaints from local traders and residents that Scotswood Road – described as the "life-blood of the city" - was being left out of the council's plans to decorate all Newcastle's major thoroughfares for the forthcoming Coronation.

INDUSTRY

In 1952 the West Newcastle riverside was filled with a variety of industries – notably the two large engineering and armaments works owned by Vickers (still usually known locally as Armstrong's). Other major employers included a gasworks and leadworks at Elswick and a glassworks at Lemington, as well as several smaller factories and an extensive goods yard. These industrial sites crowded along the water's edge. This meant that local residents had no access to the river, which anyway was very polluted at this time as toxic effluent poured into it from the factories.

Behind the scenes of all this busy industrial activity, however, the underlying story was of stagnation and decline following the end of the wartime boom. There was a steady loss of jobs along the riverside area. This process was to accelerate during the following two decades until most of these industries had disappeared by the end of the 1970s.

Coalmining, which had traditionally been a major employer in the west end, was in decline across the region during the 1950s. Most of Newcastle's pits had closed by then, especially those near the Tyne where coalmining had been carried on for centuries. There were still many miners living in the west end at this time, however, working in remaining pits such as the Caroline Pit in Slatyford or further afield in newer pits with workings stretching deep under the sea. This would soon change, as mining jobs in the northern region fell by more than two-thirds between 1958 and 1965.



In 1952, Vickers still dominated employment in the west end, occupying most of the riverside land as far west as Scotswood bridge with its two engineering factories at Elswick and Scotswood. Although the numbers employed had fallen sharply after the war, it was still common to find three generations of one family working for the company. Many of the industrial processes had changed little in decades.

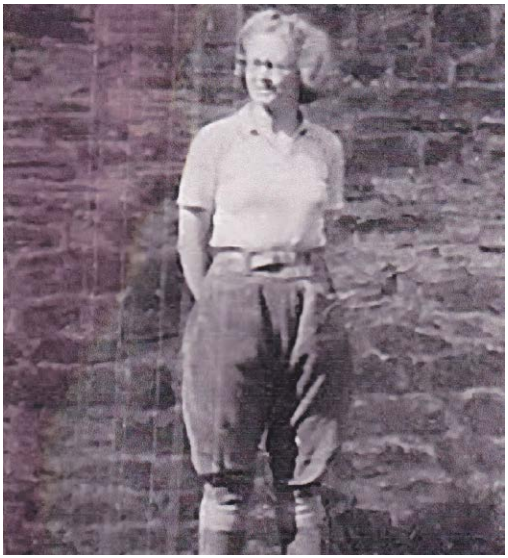
Elswick leadworks was the oldest surviving factory on the riverside, dating from the 18th century. The Shot Tower, from which balls of molten lead were dropped to make lead shot, was not demolished until 1969. Also visible on the left of this photograph is the adjacent gasworks.

The chimneys of Adamsez factory in Scotswood were a landmark on the riverside. The company was famous for its toilets and other bathroom ware, relying on traditional manual skills. These products were manufactured from fireclay which came from a nearby drift mine.

By 1952 there was only one cone remaining from the original four tall cone-shaped glasshouses of the Lemington glassworks. The factory was reputed to have produced a million glass bulbs in a single week in the early 1950s. The factory is gone but the last cone, which is made from about one and three quarter million bricks, still stands today.

WOMEN AT WORK

The popular image of the west end of Newcastle in the 1950s tells us that it was dominated by heavy industries employing men, but this was only part of the picture. During the war, thousands of women had been drafted in to work in Vickers and other factories producing weapons and munitions. When the war ended, they lost their jobs.



Ella Watson, pictured here in her uniform, was one of many local women who had joined the Land Army to help maintain agricultural production while men were away in the armed forces. The Land Army was finally disbanded in 1952.

Women workers at Elswick Leatherworks

During the 1950s, women comprised more than a quarter of the workforce. They were employed in a variety of jobs – in factories, offices, shops and other places – but their choices were often limited by old prejudices about women's place.

In 1952 women were paid less and had worse conditions than men, even when doing similar jobs. It was not until the 1970s that the government brought in laws to try to ensure that women had equal pay and were not subject to discrimination at work.

Tracing office at Vickers Elswick works

London and Newcastle tea company

Some employers would not accept married women, and it was common for women to lose their jobs when they married or had children. This was the experience of Margaret Tweedy who worked as a clerk for the Co-operative Wholesale Society in Blandford Square during the 1950s.

"It was the men who were the bosses. There were men in the office but they were higher grade than the girls were.

When I got married, I asked permission if I could stay on. You had to get written permission to stay on from the boss in the office. But when you were pregnant you could work up to about six, seven months and then you had to leave. That was it. You didn't have any choice."

Catherine Lindsay's Memories of Elswick Road School

Elswick Road Senior School trip to Lake District, c1952.

It was the most horrendous winter when I started at the age of five. That would have been 1946. You had the old-fashioned radiators then which were only lukewarm. Everyone had to put on coats, hats and scarves – if you were lucky enough to have them – and go out into the school yard with the teacher and do exercises to keep warm. Everybody got free milk then. It was bitterly cold with ice on the top, but you still had to drink it.

I remember when we went up into the Juniors, and we were agog because we had proper desks with ink wells in. Mostly I remember the Seniors. This was only girls. The boys had left to go to different schools. We didn't have a kitchen there, and we had to walk up to Bentinck Road to the school there and use their kitchen. Eventually they built a prefab at Elswick Road School with a kitchen and a little annexe on with a dining table. That was all to get you used to when you left home and when you were married. Often we used to cook a meal and serve it to the teachers in this annexe. They made one of the rooms off the school into bathrooms. Most of us didn't have baths at home. That was brilliant because some kids had never had a bath.

I just loved my schooldays. What impressed me most, looking back, was how they prepared us for working life. They started taking the older students to different places, such as Wills Factory, to see what it was like – no thanks! We even went to Pilgrim Street Police Station, and they even put us in a cell and slammed the door so you knew what it was like. My friend and I decided we wanted to be secretaries. Our parents found us a private typing school and we used to go there once a week and learned to touch-type. The school put our name forward to the College of Further Education in Bath Lane, and we went there for a full year for shorthand and typing, and we both ended up as secretaries, and moved on from there.

GLIMPSES OF 1950S

Many of the families pictured here on a staff outing from Richardson's leatherworks in the 1950s lived just behind the factory in company housing on Shumac Street and Water Street. These houses were demolished in 1971 when the leatherworks closed.

Tanks on their way from Vickers works were a common site on the streets of Elswick in the 1950s. These houses on Gloucester Street were declared unfit in the late 1950s and demolished in the following decade.

SCOTSWOOD ROAD PUBS

During the 1950s Scotswood Road was a vibrant street at the heart of the community. As well as dozens of shops, there were at least 46 pubs along the road, mainly on the north side. Some of their names referred to places from the area's history, such as the Crooked Billet pit which was long gone by 1952, the Flax Mill and the Farmers Inn.

Many of the pubs along Scotswood Road were named after products or manufacturing processes at Vickers Armstrong's engineering works which occupied most of the riverside land on the south side of the road. The factory still dominated employment in the area, but by the end of the 1950s the number of workers was half its pre-war level. These pubs included the Gun, the Forge Hammer, the Rifle and the Mechanics Arms.

This is the entrance to Vickers No 29 shop on the south side of Scotswood Road at Elswick.

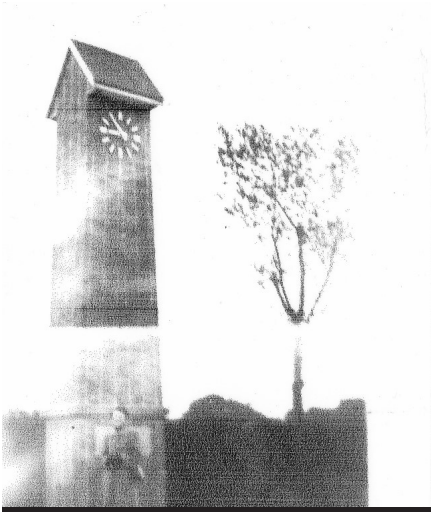
A Memory of Bill Frizzle and the Clock Tower

Bill Frizzle, pictured here with his wife Sheila, was conscripted into the army in 1952. Compulsory service did not end in the UK until 1960. His story is told by his daughter Lynne.

My Dad, William Frizzle, met my Mam, Sheila, when they lived in Benwell – Dad at Sutton Dwellings and Mam at Bilbrough Gardens. They were courting when my Dad had to go away and do his two years National Service. That was 1952 to 1954. Dad asked Mam to wait for him until he returned. They wrote to each other and sent many pictures backwards and forwards over those two years. Dad spent much of his National Service stationed in Egypt.

Dad was a Freeman of Newcastle as far back as I can remember. He joined the Herbage Committee where he had the honour and privilege of helping to look after Exhibition Park as well as other green spaces. I remember Dad telling us three children about having the Coronation Clock restored in 2012. It had fallen into disrepair over the years. There were pigeons nesting in it and the clock had stopped. Dad was instrumental in its refurbishment. He had the roof replaced, a solar panel and light added, the inscription renewed with gold lettering, and slate chippings added to its base.

I found many photographs of their courting days while clearing the family home. One photograph I found was one Mam sent to Dad in Egypt in June 1954. We were surprised to see her standing in front of the clock in Exhibition Park. This was erected in 1953 by the Freemen of Newcastle to commemorate the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. My Mam wrote on the back of the picture: "You can see the plaque behind me that tells you who erected it! Nice, isn't it? All my love Sheila XXX". It was dated 17.6.1954.



This is a copy of the photograph sent by Sheila to Bill while he was abroad on National Service. You can just see her standing in front of the clock tower.

The clock tower as it looks today

It seems it was a special place and held fond memories for Mam and Dad. This was obviously why he'd been so keen to have the clock restored to its former glory! We didn't realise just how special it was to them both. I've been to see it many times, and it fills me with love and pride.

Bill and Sheila's daughter Lynne is pictured here in Exhibition Park in 2022, with the clock tower visible on the north side of the lake.

ST JAMES' GRAVEYARD

By 1952, the graveyard next to St James' Church in Benwell had served as the parish graveyard for almost 120 years. More than 12,000 people had been buried there, including some of the wealthiest and most powerful people on Tyneside.

St James' Church, Benwell Lane, pictured in the 1950s.

By the 1950s far fewer people were being buried here than in earlier years. Cremation had become more common and a new cemetery had been opened on the West Road. There were only six burials at St James' in 1952, and only 71 in the whole decade. Most of the plots had been filled by then, and the graveyard finally closed for burials in 1966.

The last person to be buried in the old part of the graveyard was Mary Ann Holmes who died in 1953. She lived in Rose Cottage, Edward Gardens, South Benwell. Mary was born in 1890. When she was nine, her father died and Mary, her mother and sister were left destitute and had to move into the workhouse. She is pictured here in front of the general dealers on Scotswood Road which she ran with her husband Edward. They had a second shop on Buddle Road in Benwell.

GLIMPSES OF 1950S

Benwell Library had a separate children's library upstairs, with its own issue desk. The furniture and equipment could be moved to allow the room to be used for lectures. The library also had a reading room where adults could sit and read newspapers and books. Both this and the children's room were closed in the 1960s.

The Second World War still cast its shadow across everyday life. Food rationing did not end until 1954, nine years after the end of the war. Bomb damage was still to be seen in the streets. The pile of stones at the bottom left of this wedding photograph came from the spire of St James' Church, Benwell. The top of the spire had been torn off in 1942 by a barrage balloon which had came loose from its moorings on a site just below the church. Stones were scattered across the street, damaging roofs on Adelaide Terrace. Fortunately, this happened in the middle of the night, so no-one was injured. The spire was not repaired until 1956.

John Carpenter's Memories of Scotswood

I was born in 1941 and spent the best part of my life in the west end of Newcastle. I remember well the wonderful, sociable atmosphere that permeated the area during the 1950s. A lot of that ambience, I believe, was a legacy stemming from the war years when most folk tended to help one another. Money was hard to come by, as was various types of food, during the early fifties. Nevertheless, even during scarcity, many lasting friendships were formed. We used our imaginations to invent ways of socialising and friendship.

There was next to no traffic on minor roads during the fifties. Children were not frightened to play outside. Outside was quiet except for the excited cries of children playing. If a car happened along, which was only a handful of times a day, you would hear them coming well before they arrived. And there would be a bakers van, grocery van, coal lorry, dustbin men and the ice cream vans that you could hear a mile off with their musical tunes. More rag and bone carts came along than vehicles. People welcomed them because the horse muck was good for their gardens!

The number of games that children played was incredible. Boys made bows and arrows from young willow trees from Denton Dene. The arrows were made from old michaelmas daisy stalks about two foot long, to which we added copper wire on the end so that they would fly high and straight for quite a distance – over roof tops at times. Catapults with rubber from Scotswood tip. Some boys made bogeys from old pram wheels which they played racing games with or went to Lemington slag heap and picked coal, placed in sacks, placed on bogeys, and dragged home. Some older boys used bone-shakers – old bikes with no tyres on – on which they hung big heavy sacks of coal from Lemington tip on the crossbar. One lad did this several times and sold the coal for 10/- a bag. This was quite a lot of money in those days. He was strong as an ox! Part of that journey - about one a half miles away – entailed dragging

it up the steep slope of Denton Road from Scotswood Road. In winter we made winter-warmers from five gallon old paint tins, which we banged lots of holes in. Then we attached lengths of copper, then roamed around the streets once we got it blazing with wood from Denton Dene or old pieces of wood or tarry-tout from the tip. Incidentally that tip lay just adjacent to where the A1 Western Bypass is now. Guy Fawkes Night we young lads looked forward to each year. We would go down the Denton Dene with our axes – everyone had one in those coal-burning days – to chop sticks for the fire. Sometimes we would begin chopping a tree down on the edge of the Dene, keeping sharp look out for a policeman. It sometimes took us several days to accomplish this criminal deed! Then we would drag the branches home, hiding them in our back gardens until the big day when we would make a gigantic bonfire. For four years we had it in a big garden on the corner which my grandparents in Dorset Road shared with their neighbours in Chepstow Road – until one year the bonfire was so hot that it cracked my grandparents' window and that put an end to that little caper.

There was plenty corner shops nearly every place you lived. No-one had fridges, so to keep our food fresh we all shopped several times a week. And shopping locally drew folk together. You met your neighbours whilst shopping, in the street or in the shop, and you consequently found out what was going on in your neighbourhood. Folk were more sociable and they co-operated with one another. Whist drives and other card games were organised in many houses. Clippy mats were made in homes with family and friends. There were bus trips were to the seaside with neighbours, mums, dads, grandparents, uncles, aunties, cousins, brothers and sisters. My mother, Annie – bless her cotton socks – arranged and organised these trips in the area we lived. She was the life and soul of that community. She could play the bones, an instrument held in the fingers and rattled together in harmony while singing. A rare talent. And she had a beautiful singing voice which was put to good use in the wonderful sing-songs to and from those bus trips to the various seaside resorts on the north east coast. Folk songs we sang the most – my mother knew them all.

Now, during the 1950s, Newcastle was probably the most cheerful place to live in the whole country. Because football fever was just about everywhere because of the success of Newcastle United football team who won the F.A. Cup in 1951, 1952 and 1955. St James' Park had crowds of 50-60,000 spectators which created great excitement and happiness throughout Tyneside. The Magpies had a wonderful team spirit, and one player in particular – "Wor Jackie" – had dynamite in his boots.

HEALTH

The National Health Service had been in operation for less than four years by 1952. The NHS was born out of the idea that healthcare should be available to everyone regardless of their wealth. Before then, people usually had to pay for their health care, including GP services. Sometimes free treatment was available from hospitals or clinics paid for by charity or run by councils. Many residents of the west end had relied on remedies passed down through their families and on the services of neighbours to help with births and illnesses.

The 1952 report of Newcastle's Medical Officer of Health reported improvements in the death rate, especially the infant mortality rate, but Newcastle still lagged behind the rest of the country. Infectious diseases such as measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough and tuberculosis continued to be a problem. Although immunisation against some infectious diseases had started to be introduced, it was not until the 1960s that mass vaccination programmes began. The report blamed much of the city's ill health on overcrowding and poor housing conditions.

By 1952 the old Newcastle General Hospital, originally part of the Workhouse, had become part of the National Health Service. The existing buildings were demolished or converted, and the hospital soon covered a large site between Westgate Road and Nuns Moor Road. Some other local healthcare facilities failed to find a place in the new NHS.

The Gables Maternity Home in Elswick had been an independent organisation, providing much needed maternity care, but it faced growing financial difficulties after the formation of the NHS. It was forced to close in 1950. The premises were taken over by the Salvation Army who renamed it Hopedene and ran it as a maternity home for single women.

Many older residents remember visits to the school clinic on Atkinson Road in Benwell to have their nits treated or for other procedures. As part of the development of a school health service, several clinics were set up in Newcastle in 1950. The Benwell clinic was located in a building on the corner of Atkinson Road and Armstrong Road which still stands today. This had originally been the offices of the Benwell and Fenham Urban District Council before those areas were incorporated into Newcastle in 1904.

This photograph shows the building in 1901 on the occasion of the death of Queen Victoria.

Another new development in the 1950s was Pendower Hall Open Air School, a facility for "delicate" children. Occupying a large Victorian house at a high point to the south of the West Road, it was Newcastle's answer to Switzerland. Fresh air was considered to be beneficial for children with illnesses such as tuberculosis, and they were literally taught in the open air. In winter, pupils and teachers were often to be found wrapped in blankets, and there are stories of ink freezing in ink wells. The school moved to a new building nearby in 1971, and is now called Hadrian School.

This photograph shows the children sleeping in a rest shed in the grounds with the windows wide open.

Daniel McDermott's Memories of St Joseph's

I went to St Joseph's School from 1952. I walked to school from where I lived in Westfield Road. You used to have to take your cap off when you passed the church. We lived in fear of the old parish priest, Father Milroy. On Fridays they would wind all the partitions back and all the children would be enjoying singing hymns in readiness for church. When Father Milroy came in you could hear a pin drop.

The mass was still in Latin in those days. You used to go on a Saturday morning to confession. There were three booths with different priests. There would be queues, but no-one would go to Father Milroy because the penances were so huge. We had Christmas decorations in the house one year, and one said "Merry Christmas". My mother took it down because Father Milroy said we shouldn't have this up because "merry" meant alcohol.

In 1952, the "tin church" still stood on the school site alongside the school buildings. This had housed the first St Joseph's Church in Benwell until the new permanent church was built in 1931. It was then used as a church hall until the 1970s. Also on the school site was a "HORSA Hut" (the initials stood for "Hutting Operations for Raising of School Leaving Age"). This had been constructed in 1949 as a temporary solution to the problem of overcrowding, exacerbated by the recent raising of the school leaving age to 15. A plan to build a new senior school south of St Joseph's Church had reached an advanced stage in the 1930s but the outbreak of war put a stop to that, and it was never revived.

GLIMPSES OF 1950S

Elswick Hall was a large mansion which had once been home to the famous developer Richard Grainger. By the 1950s it was no longer a private house, but the hall still stood in the middle of its former grounds which were now a public park. The local residents seen in this photograph were among several families who had come to the UK from Pakistan and had settled in Elswick.

There was a Sea Cadets Hall on Elswick Road. Boys were taught skills such as tying different types of knots. Inside the building was the base of a large boat which was too big to have been carried through the doors, so it may have predated the building or been built inside it.

Norma Scott's Memories of Benwell

This picture of a back yard in Arthur's Hill features a typical tin bath of the period.

We lived in a downstairs flat at 56 Armstrong Road. It was a typical street of typical Tyneside flats. The upstairs flats had three bedrooms, a kitchen and a small scullery with steep stairs leading down into their back yard. The downstairs flats had only two bedrooms. We three girls shared a three-quarter size bed in the small back bedroom until I grew too big and had a single bed in the corner of my Mam and Dad's room. There was barely room to move in there and we always dressed in front of the fire in the kitchen. At first we only had gas lighting and the pipes stuck out from the wall with a fragile gas mantle providing the light. Outside was a largish yard on two levels with a step up to the second level where there was an outside toilet with a wooden seat next to the coal house. The area near the house housed the poss-tub complete with a wooden dolly and a mangle and had a large tin bath hanging on a nail in the wall. The back lane had an air raid shelter in it.

The lighting of the fire in the black leaded range was quite an event. The poker was rattled around the grate to get rid of last night's ashes and the cinders put to one side. Old newspapers were crumpled and laid in the bottom of the grate, then the chopped wooden sticks went on a criss-cross fashion with the cinders and some fresh coal placed on top. After the paper in the grate was lit, the shovel was balanced on the front of the grate and a large sheet of newspaper, usually the News of the World, draped across it with a small gap at the bottom to create a draught and get the fire blazing. The fire roared and crackled and the paper had to be held in place until it was judged to be "away". As I held the paper there was always some article that caught

my eye and the trick was to read it quickly before that part of the paper scorched or burst into flames. Sometimes it was the soot in the chimney that burst into flames and the fire would be put out with a pan of water and I would go outside to see the flames coming out of the chimney and shout when they stopped so that the fire could be relit. It was scary seeing all the flames and sparks shooting out of the chimney pot and I was scared the house would be set on fire and the fire engine would have to come because I had seen that happen in other houses.

My grandparents lived in number 52, the downstairs flat that adjoined ours. Nana had a wooden table and a horsehair settee, and feather beds that went into lumps and needed to be shaken hard. On the mantelpiece were two Rington's tea caddies and below the mantelpiece a brass bar held pieces of washing to dry which usually included a pair of Granda's long johns. The wooden table always had a sticky fly paper hanging from the ceiling lamp above it that was usually covered in dead flies and the table was often covered with flour while she kneaded and punched away at bread dough that would be put in bread tins covered with a tea towel on the side of the fire to rise.

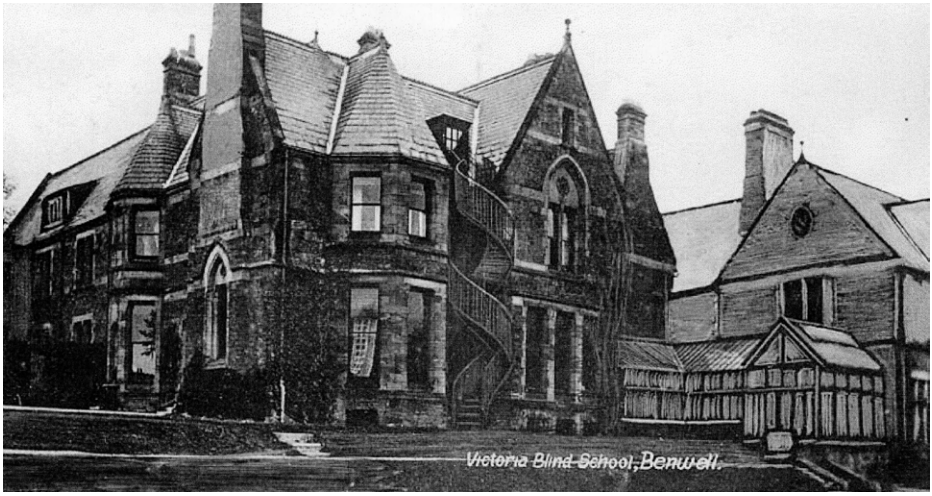
The flats were on a main road leading to a steep bank down to the factory. The road would be swarming with men and women going to work for eight o'clock and then again when the six o'clock whistle blew for knocking off time, even blocking the trolley buses from passing.

This story is taken from "What's in a Name? A social and family history" by Norma Scott.

This undated photograph shows workers walking up Dunn Street in Elswick on their way from work at Vickers factory.

BENWELL'S BIG HOUSES

Benwell used to be home to some of the richest and most powerful people on Tyneside. In the early 19th century, it had fewer than a thousand residents, many of them servants, gardeners and others working for the wealthy elite who lived in large houses and mansions with extensive grounds. By 1952 many of these buildings had been demolished and the grounds sold off for new housing developments. Several of the big houses were still standing, but, with one exception, they were no longer private homes.



Benwell Dene was built in 1866 as a home for the banker Thomas Hodgkin and his family. In 1952 it housed the Royal Victoria School for the Blind which remained there until 1985. The School for the Blind also occupied an adjacent property, Benwell Grange, which was used as a hostel and training centre for young women. Benwell Dene still stands today but Benwell Grange was demolished in 1968 and flats built on the site.

Benwell House was a stone mansion, dating from 1822, set in landscaped grounds surrounded by woodland. In 1902 it became a hotel. In the fifties it was a popular place for respectable people to have a quiet drink. It closed in 1969 and the site is now occupied by the Co-operative Funeral Service.

Benwell Hall was a fine 18th century house set its own wooded and landscaped grounds. Its last residents were the Bramble family. William Bramble was an entrepreneur best known locally for his shops on Adelaide Terrace. By 1952 Bramble had died but his daughters, who were local school teachers, continued to live in the house until 1979 when it was sold and demolished.

Benwell Towers was a large mansion designed by the famous architect John Dobson. It had been home to a series of wealthy and prestigious residents, including the Priors of Tynemouth and later the Bishops of Newcastle. In the 1950s it was the base for the Mines Fire and Rescue Service. Its underground tunnels, originally built as escape routes for priests during the Reformation, providing a suitable site for training exercises. The firemen lived with their families on the adjacent Pendower Estate which enabled them to respond quickly to mining accidents.

GLIMPSES OF 1950S

Scotswood Road was a long and busy street, full of shops and pubs, serving the community packed into the terraces above. It is pictured here looking west from the edge of the town. The shops were all demolished two decades later, along with the surrounding houses. The factories that occupied the south side of the road have also gone.

In sharp contrast to the densely built terraces above the riverside, further north there were still open fields remaining in 1952. This is Silverhill Farm, later to be surrounded by new housing on Silver Lonnen and other streets.

Seventy Years A Queen

In 1952 there was such a scene
When a young princess became a Queen.
There was such excitement and plans were made
The streets were closed to set the stage.
The flags were flying and the bunting up
Every child was to be given a cup.
The tables now ready with lots of food
Everyone knew that the day would be good.
The children excited and grown-ups too
With lots of exciting things to do.
Dancing, singing and games to be played
Happy memories of that day were made.
Now 70 years on she is still our Queen
And once again we will set the scene.
The flags, the bunting, tables and food
We know this day will also be good.
As the magic of the day brings us together
Making friendships and memories to last forever.
Now that young princess is still our Queen
What an amazing 70 years they have truly been.

Margaret Batey

West end resident Margaret Batey wrote
this poem to mark the Queen's Jubilee

1952 and All That

This book contains a collection of photographs, stories and memories, giving a varied picture of what life was like in the west end of Newcastle 70 years ago when Queen Elizabeth began her reign.

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