



Memories of former pupils and Teachers

Colin Marsh

(at the School 1959-1966)

It was an accident of history, in a sense, that I went to Selhurst - or even lived in Croydon - at all. When my father came out of the RAF in 1946, and married my mother, he joined ABC Cinemas as a Trainee Manager, and they sent him to work in Kilburn. After he died, I found some notes he had made about the difficulty of getting home, late at night, from Kilburn to West Wickham, where my mother, by then pregnant with me, was living with her parents. I was actually born in West Wickham, and my parents only moved to Norbury when dad was assigned to the South London district of the Company, and was based at a cinema some OCs will remember - the Rex, on London Road, Norbury (next to a pub then called the Norbury Hotel). Our house was on Stanford Road, right opposite Norbury Manor Boys' School.

I have often thought about how different my life would have been if Dad had remained based at Kilburn - I have always been proud of being a South Londoner (NEVER a Croydonian!) and the thought of being a North Londoner has never particularly appealed !

Norbury was an odd place - it is right at the top end of Croydon, and only a few yards' walk from our house you were in the County of Surrey, and had my parents bought a house further down Stanford Road, I may well have ended up at Mitcham Grammar rather than Selhurst (several of my friends from Norbury Manor Primary went there) but, just to complicate matters, if you walked from our house to Norbury Station via

Hermitage Lane, you passed an LCC primary school so, had we lived in that part of Norbury, I might have ended up at an LCC school. When asked where her grandchildren lived, my Grandmother always said Streatham rather than Norbury as she always thought the former was a cut above the latter.

The point is this: my mother's family owned a butcher's shop in Streatham - trading as James Uff - and until the business was sold in the mid - 1950s - we had our weekend meat delivered every Saturday morning by a lad on a bike, despite there being other butcher's shops within walking distance of our house that we could have used. I remember some occasions when my Dad took me with him when he went to the shop to pay the staff wages. My Great Uncle, who ran the business, was terminally ill by this time, and the family had rallied round to keep the business going *pro tem*.

There may be other OCs - probably slightly older than me! - who lived in Norbury, close to the border with Streatham, who remember the butcher's shop called JAMES UFF, and may have bought their meat there. I am not sure how long the business was in Streatham. So far as I can discover, we - the family - disposed of it in about 1956, but it may have been there since around the time of the First World War. I remember my Grandmother telling me that she, with her mother and sister, had had to run the business during the war as her father was dead and her brother was in the Army. Reginald Uff survived the war and ran the business until illness overtook him. What I don't know is whether the shop was always in Streatham, or relocated there sometime after WW1. My Grandmother was born in 1893 in Wembley, and one of the mysteries I am trying to solve is how a family from Wembley came to be running a shop in Streatham. Any OCs who can help me put together this particular piece of my family history are very welcome to contact me.

I was always a little uncertain exactly where the border between Croydon and Streatham was. I think it was at Hermitage Bridge, but the signs saying 'Borough of Croydon' were close to Norbury Station. Somewhere, I have an old postcard showing a pre - WW1 Croydon Corporation tram passing under the railway bridge at Norbury station heading in the London direction. From what I have read, until the setting up of what became London Transport in (I think) the 1930s, passengers wanting to go to Streatham or beyond by tram had to change to an LCC tram at or near Hermitage Bridge - Croydon Corporation trams could not work through.

Another quirk of living in a place like Norbury where three Local Education Authorities met was the fact that an old school friend of my father's lived close to the large Westminster Bank sports ground, although his house was in Mitcham, not Norbury. Their daughter - the same age as me - went to Streatham High School, which was LCC run, while their younger son went to Alfred Mizen primary school (probably twice as far to walk to from their house as was Norbury Manor PS), and then Mitcham Grammar. This may all seem terribly trivial now, when parents have more choice over their children's school, but in the 1950s you normally went to the nearest primary school to your home. Choice of secondary school was determined, however, by the 11+ results - and even if my parents had wanted me to go to a school like Mitcham Grammar or Streatham - both nearer to home than was Selhurst - this would not have been possible. My sister, who failed the 11+ but was selected at 13+ for a 'grammar - type' education had to leave Norbury Manor and transfer to John Newnham in Addington - an awfully long journey by two buses from Norbury - and yet she could have walked to Streatham High.

Odd how these things work out, isn't it ?

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Editor's Note: Colin has written an extensive piece about his adventures in the theatre, entitled ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE.

Part One was included in the 2019 Magazine, to which fully paid-up members now have access on this website, and Part Two was intended to appear on the website in June 2020. Part Two has, however, now been carried forward in full to the 2021 magazine instead. The whole article will be available on the website in June 2021.