

Anthony Green Remembers.....

Being a Saturday delivery lad at Webbs



Electric bread float of the type used at Webbs.

Image courtesy of Anthony Green

I began working as a 'Saturday Lad' at Webbs in early 1956. Although the earliest age when it was possible to do part time work for schoolchildren was 13, I actually started a few months before my 13th birthday as my brother Vince, who was leaving school at 16 to take up an apprenticeship, proposed me for a job there before he left.

I began by working in the seed shop which was the other side of Peakman Street from the bread shop (it's now Shipley's) where I packed seed potatoes which arrived in large sacks into brown paper bags and put on the labels. I can still remember some of the names such as Arran Pilot (and all the other Arrans), Home Guard, King Edward and Pentland. I then put bulk peas into packets and then runner beans.

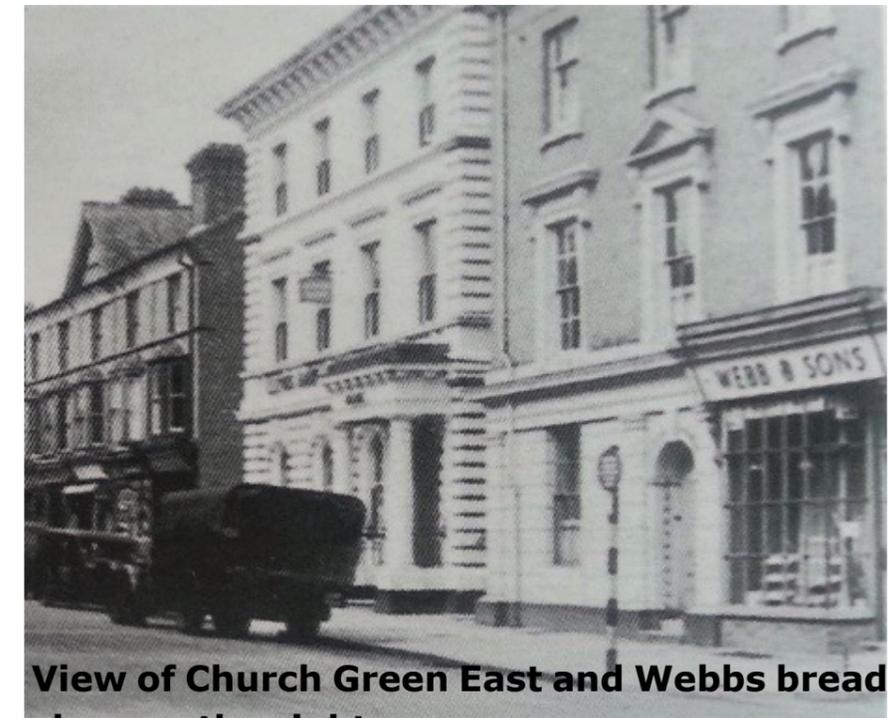
I then moved over the road to the enclosed area behind the bakery where the vans were loaded and charged, and other activities were carried out. A task I well remember was bread slicing and wrapping. The machine would never be allowed these days, as it consisted of row of vertically activated blades (similar to hacksaw blades) and you pushed the large tin loaf down an inclined chute using the other loaves so that it was pushed through the blades. The sliced loaf then went through a complex, and largely unreliable, wrapping section which used wax paper and hot plates which swung up and melted the wax to seal the two sides.

At the beginning I helped numerous roundsmen with their rounds when their 'Saturday lad' was ill or on holiday. I think that I must have delivered bread in every road in the town! However, eventually, I had a permanent round where I helped the roundsman every Saturday.

The routes were amazingly spread. My permanent round did Bridley Moor Road, the Cedar Road area (we used to go to the Cedars and the housekeeper used to come out and collect the bread), we then crossed Hewell Road and went up Dixon's yard, past the coal sidings, and up to the wooden bungalows. We then returned, went along Elm Road, Britten Street, turned into Bromsgrove Road and did all the houses as far as Cherry Tree Walk. We then crossed the town and did Marsden Road (including Mount Street and Glover Street) and Lodge Road and then did Farm Road/Sillins Avenue area. I think that we had one or two other bits and pieces as well and by the time we had finished the poor old battery in the float was really struggling.

When I think of the amount of cash, I carried in my leather money satchel, it is horrifying in terms of the risks today, but then it was not an issue.

I worked at Webbs for 5 years, beginning a few months before my 13th birthday and finishing a few months before my 18th birthday, as I thought that perhaps I should do a bit of revision for my 'A' levels.



View of Church Green East and Webbs bread shop on the right

Image courtesy of Anthony Green

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My early years in Redditch 1943 to 1954



Myself and my friend Alan Moss outside my house in Bridley Moor Road. About 1953.

Image courtesy of Anthony Green

I was born in June 1943 when my parents lived in Bridley Moor Road and my earliest memory is Dad carrying me to the top of the road to the gate which went into Bridley Moor Farm and looking over the gate at cows and sheep grazing in the fields.

When I was 5 years old, I went to Bridge Street infants' school (the school is now called Holyoakes School). The infant's school was co-educational but when we moved up to the 'big' school, at about 8 years, it was separated into boys and girls and there was a wall down the middle of the playground.

Later Bridley Moor farm was taken over by the local council and they began constructing the prefabs in Cedar Road/View and I remember walking through the construction area on my way to school.

From Cedar Road there was a back entrance to the Redditch Football ground and, if you went in at half time, they allowed 'junior' supporters in for nothing. So, I used to watch Redditch Town quite often at that time.

After the farm closed it was taken over and became the clubhouse of the Batchley Social Club. Initially, they used the farmhouse as the club building but steadily added additional buildings to extend the facilities. At its peak it was a major centre for the local population, Dad was a member and I remember them having local flower/vegetable shows in the courtyard. Dad won a prize for his vegetables, I think runner beans, at one of the competitions.

I was baptised into the Congregational Church in Evesham Street, and I have always had a soft spot for this non-conformist group, but for a small child the walk into town was too much. So, for a period I went to Sunday School at Bridge Street School and I had a small book which I stuck in pictures of biblical figures. I then moved to a more convenient Sunday School at the Batchley Club. However, when Mum discovered, when I made an indiscrete comment, that the room smelt of beer, I was quickly removed, and I didn't have to go to Sunday School again.



Bridley Moor Road street party at the end of the war in 1945. L was 2 and circled. I was held up by my Mum.

Image courtesy of Anthony Green

Moving around for a child was simple, you walked or had a bike. I began, of course, as a young child with a tricycle, but as soon as possible I had a bike. It wasn't new, Dad bought it second-hand and refurbished it. We used to range all over the town. Our favourite venues were Brockhill Lane as far as the canal (the old Wharf), Pitcher Oak Wood, where we used to play at 'warfare', and the Abbey Meadows area.

At the age of 11 we took the 11+ and I passed and went to the local grammar school, the Redditch County High School, in Easemore Road (now Trinity High). This was a major change as school is so important and I soon made friends from outside my immediate area. Things would never be the same again. There is a view that the 1950's were depressing. However, I think that this is because almost all the photographs of the time are in black and white. However, I loved it and, of course, I don't remember it in monochrome, but in colour!

Anthony Green