

# My Redditch Memories 1948 - 1964

## *In the beginning.....*



*A Young Roger outside 27 Bromfield Road in the sunshine*

*Image from Roger Morton*

**roofs! I remember seeing the inside of one bungalow just as the trees were taking off & the slope on the pitched floor before they broke through was amazing - I hoped it would happen to our bungalow as I would have had a great time playing on the slope!**

**My father worked for the Gas Board in Redditch. As I recall both our early houses were obtained through his work.**

**I was born in Bromsgrove hospital & initially lived at 27 Bromfield Road. Left is a photograph taken of me in a pushchair parked in the road outside our house. Those were the days, no traffic to worry about.**

**Our house, which still exists, stood over the Redditch to Tewkesbury railway tunnel. I was only little but I can recall seeing cracks in the stairway walls & hearing the trains when they went through the tunnel underneath.**

**Around 1950 we moved to a new estate on the hill between Crabbs Cross & Hunt End. The house was a prefabricated semi- detached bungalow with a thick pitch floor. Dad definitely got to occupy it because of his job at the Gas Board. Living there was enjoyable. There was not much traffic around the estate & just up the road was farmland & a bluebell wood. Down the road were more fields. I enjoyed playing in these fields. Also down the road was an old thatched cottage which is still in place. The Brown family lived there. We remained friends for many years.**

**During our time there or perhaps soon after we left, the pitch floors produced a fascinating (for me!) sight. The bungalows had obviously been built in a hurry because the trees originally on the site were not properly removed before building took place. They steadily grew throughout this time & eventually grew through some of the bungalow**



**Roger Morton**

**Bromsgrove Hospital in the 1960s**

*Image Francis Firth Collection*

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And so to school.....



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St. Luke's School, Evesham Road, Headless Cross

Image from the Geoff Holmes Collection

On March 9th 1953 I started at my first school - St. Luke's Infant's in Headless Cross. I think this was most likely because Dad was planning to return to live in Redditch.

My first classroom was the very large one directly opposite St. Luke's Church. It used a stove for heating & each morning the crate of school milk was placed besides it to defrost the bottles. I did not like the warm milk this produced & asked Mum to ask the teacher (whose name I forget) to leave my milk bottle outside the entrance door. This was agreed to & I remember going outside to collect my bottle.

Another memory from this class was the day Dad arrived to collect me to take me to our new house in Plymouth Road. I enjoyed leaving school early that afternoon. The day was around the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth. On the day we all received a copy of the 'Coronation Souvenir' which I still hold.

An interesting point about this little book is that it was edited by G. M. Anstis & Roy Vann. My next school, St. Luke's Junior School's headmaster was Mr. Anstis & in charge of Redditch library, which I later visited at least once a week was Mr. Vann.

At Christmas we spent, or at least the other pupils in the class spent, our time making decorations. At the start of operations newspaper was spread on the classroom tables. We had been told not to talk, but I suddenly saw a photograph of Santa Clause in Hollington's Redditch store & without thinking said 'I saw him on Saturday'. I was immediately marched into the classroom corner by the entrance door & spent the whole afternoon there. I have later discovered that the Hollington name is on my family tree.

I remember visiting the Headmistress with my family in heavy rain & always remember that her office roof was leaking. She told us that it leaked whenever rain fell.

Another memory is that when I reached seven years I joined my final class & realised that I could not read the black board from where I was sitting. I was taken to the optician in Evesham Street, was prescribed glasses & from then until to-day I have been wearing glasses.

Roger Morton



The Redditch Coronation Souvenir Book

Image from the Redditch Historic Archives

## **My Redditch Memories 1948 - 1964**

### ***Finding my way in life.....***

On my journey to the Infant's School from my new house in Plymouth Road I would leave home, walk through the allotments at the end of the back garden, continue up to Rectory Road, cross over, walk through the Rectory gardens, through the large gate at the end of that path & into the School grounds.

Our house in Plymouth Road was number 193. A few years later it was re-numbered - to 175. The reason for this reduction was & still is a puzzle. It was a semi-detached house with a nice long garden & a stream at the end. We lived there until 1964 when we moved to Comhampton, near Ombersley where Dad had bought a former orchard at auction where he was the only bidder & I think bought it for 750 pounds much to the owner's annoyance.

I needed to complete my 'O' levels so stayed with our neighbour until the July. I enjoyed my stay very much. I listened to the first Pirate Radio broadcasts even from 'Radio Atlanta' which later became 'Radio Caroline North'.

On arrival at Plymouth Road we found many of the windows still had blackout curtains attached. The gas meter was operated with pennies. Dad hung onto it until we left. I believe we had the last coin operated meter in Redditch!

After going to bed I used to read my library books. I used a candle placed in a used 'Fray Bentos' tin. After a few months the candles except the last one had turned into liquid wax. I continued to read my book & suddenly the whole tin caught fire. I hurried into the bathroom & collected a glass of water. I tipped it onto the burning wax. The flame hit the ceiling. I got one of our books & put it flat on the tin. The flame disappeared but the smell was amazing. When Dad came home from his pub visit, I heard Mum telling him about the smell. He assumed it was a gas leak, got out his matches & lit them around the meter. Fortunately it was not a gas leak & even more fortunately they never learnt that the smell had come from my bedroom.

1955 saw my arrival at St. Luke's Junior School in Rectory Road. Lunch was eaten in the old Memorial Hall. I particularly remember my Geography classes held in the air raid shelter at the back of the school. The classes were operated by Mr. Nicholls. On one occasion he told us that in every language in the world the letter 'Q' is always followed with the letter 'U'. If anyone could find a language which did not agree with this statement he would pay the finder two & six pence. Does anyone reading this watch the weather on Sky News? Sponsored by 'Qatar Airways'.

**Roger Morton**



*Plymouth Road at the top, Evesham Road at the bottom and Rectory Road in the centre  
(Well that's what I think - DC)*

*Image from the Redditch Library Collection*

## **Roger Morton Remembers.....**

# **My Redditch Memories 1948 - 1964**



### ***Moving away and then back....***

I think at Christmas 1958 (or was it 1957?) I went to Redditch with my family & somehow got separated. Darkness had fallen so I went to the bus station, waited for a bus to arrive, got on & told the conductor that I had lost my parents & could I go home on the bus without paying so that I could go to our house & see my Grandmother who was staying with us at the time. The conductor agreed & I accordingly arrived home. Sadly mobile phones did not exist at that time so Dad arrived home in a worried state only to find me there already. He had left my mother in Redditch & had to drive back to collect her.

My mother died in tragic circumstances on April 1st 1959. I had been asked by my friend to go & watch 'Well I Only Asked' starring Bernard Breslaw (a member of the 'Army Game' cast on ITV). On my return home I was told that she had been taken to the Queen Elizabeth hospital in Birmingham, she died later that night.

A few years ago a relative who I had not seen since those times told me that I had 'run riot' when this happened. I did not but I have often thought to myself that I received no support (except perhaps from my friend & my uncle & aunt) whatsoever. No Social Service visits for me, nothing. 1959 also saw me taking and, after help from Dad who spoke to the assessors, passed the 11 Plus. During the summer we had a visit from a representative of Old Swinford Hospital School in Stourbridge who wanted to know if any child was interested in joining them. I was a keen reader of the Jennings & Derbyshire books & thought going to a boarding school would be fun, so I stepped forward.

As a prize for passing the 11 Plus Dad took me down to the Enfield Factory where he met an employee who he knew & who produced a new bicycle for me. I enjoyed cycling very much. I used to cycle all round the area, with my friend & by myself.

Another pleasure was the annual carnival which I watched pass every year. 1959 would have been the first year I missed it, but rather stupidly I went for a cycle ride along the road from Bromsgrove to Redditch & on a downward hill I decided to play a tune with my foot on the spokes of the front wheel. This worked but suddenly I went over the handlebars & hit my head on the road. Later on I ended up in Bromsgrove hospital, whether it was because of this accident or because I used to visit the Redditch swimming pool & caught something there I do not know. However the good news was that I was able to see the carnival procession before I started school in Stourbridge.

One of my memories of my stay in hospital was that the radio was set to the BBC 'Light Programme'. During the day they would broadcast songs performed by 'house' artists. I was annoyed that my favourite song 'Lipstick on Your Collar' by Connie Francis was detrimentally performed by a house artist.

I joined Old Swinford in October 1959. Dad remarried the following February & I left the school in the following July. Whilst there a fellow pupil gave me a quite large penknife with corkscrew which his cousin had given him.

I finally arrived at the Redditch County High School in September 1960. I gradually settled in but certain teachers left a lot to be desired. Mr. Hart the maths teacher is a good example of this. If you were a boy & misbehaved in class or could not answer a question because he decided you were not taking enough attention he would grab hold of your hair & lift you out of your seat. If he did this to-day he would liable for an assault charge. I did quite well in the maths class at the boarding school but I failed miserably in the High School, so much so that when in my final year were given a form for our parents to decide which subjects we should take in the 'O' levels. This was an opportunity to stop attending the maths classes so I took it & stopped. The next thing that happened was that Mr. Hart complained to Mr. Morrell the Deputy Headmaster that I was not attending his classes. Mr. Morrell called me in to ask the reason why to which I replied that I had given the subject up. He told me that I was the first boy in the school to ever have done this. What I did not say was that I had not handed the form to my parents but had completed it myself & then returned it.

**Roger Morton.**

## My Redditch Memories 1948 - 1964



### ***On To Big School.....***

One day in my first year at the RCHS I was in the boys toilets with other members of my class. They were all laughing & talking and, I suppose because I had not been there long, was left out. I used to cycle to school & would take my box spanner which I kept in the bag at the back of my bike into school because I thought it might be stolen if I did not. I am sorry to say that because I was being left out of the laughing & talking without thinking I fitted my spanner onto the tops of the taps & began to turn it. The following day the headmistress of the lower school called me into her office (I presume someone must have told her about my activities) took my spanner off me, waved it at me & told me that the boy's toilet had been flooded that morning & then dropped it on her desk. I did not receive any punishment only that I was told never to bring the spanner into school again.



*An aerial view of Redditch County High School. The "Pool" is in the centre right of the photo*

*Image from the Redditch Library Collection*

I have always enjoyed a reasonable singing voice, especially when I was young. At some time when I was in the RCHS I was enrolled in Mr. Morris's new choir. I did not enjoy this and told my friend. He suggested that on my next attendance I should sing out of tune. This I did. Mr. Morris heard the out of tune voice and proceeded to go round the choir and listen to each member as they sang. I continued to sing badly, he heard me and asked me to leave!

When I was in the third year at the RCHS a campaign was started to turn the former water tank built in the Second World War for the dousing of air raid fires into a school swimming pool. The headmaster at the time of construction had asked the builders to make the tank into the shape of a swimming pool. Nothing had been done about the transformation until 1963. The school organised a garden fete and each class had a stall. The stall which raised the most money for the project was promised a prize of a day in the new pool. My French teacher, Mr. Riley set up a hot dog stall which was a rip roaring success and we won the prize. Sadly when the day for our day in the pool arrived so did the miserable weather which though disappointing did not stop me and a few others spending the day in the pool.

**Roger Morton**

## My Redditch Memories 1948 - 1964



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*Looking towards Walford Street over the old Redditch Market*

*Image from the Geoff Holmes Collection*

### **After School.....**

The most surprising thing about all this is that from the day when I left school I worked in jobs, especially later on which needed expertise in mathematical matters. I worked for Crown Court and calculated the correct amounts payable to Solicitors & Barristers. I then worked for a firm of London Solicitors as their Costs Department Manager.

Whilst attending the RCHS I got to know Redditch quite well. After school we would either go to my friend's mother's hairdressing salon for a cup of tea or visit the 'Caramba Coffee Bar' in now what is called 'Station Way' (I don't think it was called that then) for a cup of coffee. They had a juke box so we enjoyed that too. 'Walk on By' seemed to be played most often.

Another place to visit was the Saturday market which was held on the flat space beyond the bus station. I remember one visit and it might have been when I was in Junior School when we visited a farmer's stall which had a cow on site which was being milked. I can clearly remember drinking a container, I think it was a mug, of milk straight from the cow. Can you imagine that happening to-day? On another occasion I bought a shaving mirror (though at the time I had not commenced shaving) which is still in use, for one and nine pence.

In those far off days rules and regulations were not so strict as to-day. Sometimes I would be asked to visit the local pub & buy a bottle of beer without any questions being asked. Each year I would go to Brazil's sweet shop in Headless Cross and buy lots of fireworks once again without question. At other times I would be asked to buy cigarettes from Brazil's and once again no questions were asked.

The allotments at the back of our house provided a lot of entertainment for my friends and I. On one occasion we found an empty oil drum that had been dumped away from the houses. We put a lot of bangers inside it & then threw a lighted one in. The explosion was amazing. Can you imagine the uproar if an eleven year old did that to-day?

The amazing winter of 1963 stands out in my mind. We had a coal fire and on the night of Boxing day I was asked to go to the coal bunker and collect some coal. Out I went & the snow was falling. The following day the news told us that Red Hill Lane was blocked. I had always thought it would be nice if snow was on the ground on my 9th March birthday - that year it was.

**Roger Morton**



**193 Plymouth Road, later re-numbered to 175 and eventually demolished to make way for the Bromsgrove highway.**

*Image from Roger Morton*