Michael Crump Remembers……..

Redditch From The Other Side Of The World

Cleveland Garage in the early 1970s

Image: GHC-0856 from the Geoff Holmes Collection

My name is Michael Crump and I grew up in Redditch in the 50s. My father owned Cleveland Garage on Rectory Road/Plymouth Road Corner.

In 1956 he took over the garage and needed to update the living area but was having difficulty finding a builder. This guy Ernie Sargent and his son in law Jack came along and said they could do the job and with their big team in just over a weeks duration. they did a great job and Jack and his wife Joan became close friends with my mum and dad. Their son was John Bonham so we knew each other quite well, but I went to Bromsgrove High and he went to Bridley Moor so we moved in different circles. His family lived in Hunt End those days . When he joined the new Led Zeppelin group he once gave me tickets for a concert in London, I never went as I was not into the heavy rock but never told him, often wonder what those tickets would be worth today if signed. The two families were close for many years until we moved to Dorset. It is great he has been acknowledged by a statue on Church Green so I am told.

In early 60's he received planning permission to redevelop the garage site and committed himself to a new home at Cookhill. Suddenly the permission was rescinded. After lots of letters my mother wrote to Harold Wilson to protest at their treatment. A Mr. Moore was sent to explain confidentially that the site would be needed for a new town yet to be announced. The final result The Redditch Development bought the site and rented back to dad until such time as they needed it. Until 1975 when we finally as a family gave up our hopes for the business, the new town board treated us as their garage. I was starting my career and got to know as customers Brian Bunch the architect and Norman Moore the Ceo. I even sold Mr Bunch a new MGB-GT. During my growing up my family were good friends with the Bonhams, and as we all know John went on to great times as Led Zeppelin drummer. I left Redditch for Dorset in 1975, and 1995 moved out here to New Zealand where I have done very well. Save for the New Town I would probably never left as my peers Donald Humpries (shoes) and Robert Nash(Heaphys) stayed.

As a boy my friend's father Mr Lewis owned Abel Morrall Ltd making aero knitting needles. We used to go on school holidays and ride the conveyor belt around the departments (That would give health and safety problems these days). Also knew Humpries farm down Feckenham Road at Walkwood. Dr. Chambers lived at Callow hill emigrated here in 1967 and recently passed away at 91. He had a practice next to Smallwood cottage hospital with Dr. Potts and Dr. Adams. I remained in touch with Dr. Chambers here until his death aged 9. You may remember he was in practice by the old hospital and lived in Callow Hill. It was his leaving in 1967 for New Zealand that sparked my early interest but it took me half a lifetime to knock on his door here.

As I said I came to New Zealand in '95 as I had been divorced a long time, the girls were settled and I had to sell my business as the recession was killing me. I sold houses here for 11 years and met my Malaysian Chinese partner as she works for the bank for the last 26 years doing mortgages. Life here at first was hard but we have both done well have two homes one on 5 acres and rental properties in Auckland. The climate is temperate sub tropical here and although the city is now very busy, the rest of New Zealand is empty. Only 5.5 million population in the two islands combined the are of which comparable to UK. Now in my seventies my days in Redditch seem like a life time away.

Michael Crump

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