

## **MEMORIES OF DAILY LIFE IN 1920s GLEDHOW**

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It is a cliché to claim that things ain't what they used to be. Yet this article demonstrates that there is much truth in this statement with regard to daily life in Gledhow. This is revealed by extracts from the oral memories of Marjorie Plows (nee Bond) born 1914 the youngest of six children, and Doris Lunn (nee Cheesebrough) born 1920 the eldest of six children.

### **Gledhow - Chandos dwellings**

1920s Gledhow was a product of half-hearted building development over the previous forty or so years that had left Gledhow with a mixture of houses, farmland and woodland. Amongst the newer houses were those built along Chandos Place and Chandos Terrace where Marjorie and Doris and their families lived (Figures 1 and 2).

The layouts inside the houses varied slightly, probably reflecting the builder's style. Number 32 Chandos Place (Marjorie's house) had, on the ground floor, a front room and a backroom with a fire oven that also heated the hot water. Washing was done in a small scullery where there was a two-ring gas hob used for 'fry-ups'. The backroom and scullery had gas lighting but everywhere else the family used candles, as the house did not have an electricity supply. Built on to the end of the scullery, and reached from a small backyard, were a coal house and a water closet (the only toilet) with a big wooden seat. On the first floor was a bathroom and two bedrooms. On the second floor there was an attic bedroom at the front and to the back an open landing was also used to sleep in; both areas had a skylight (Figure 3).

Doris's family house at 37 Chandos Terrace had a different layout: here there was an inside toilet in the bathroom and a cellar instead of





Fig. 2 Post Card. View of Gledhow from Chapel Allerton. c. 1910. Courtesy of Arthur Livesey.



Fig. 3 The photograph shows the grassed front road on Chandos Place c. 1930 looking towards the cornfields. *Author's Collection.*

a scullery in which to do the washing and store the coal. The house had electricity, making it a modern home in the 1920s.

### **Domestic life**

A particular purpose existed to each day: Monday was washing day, Tuesday ironing, midweek general cleaning and Friday was baking day, and Marjorie recalled being told that she was born on a Friday which meant she held up the baking.

Whatever the day's activity, dinner, the main meal of the day, was eaten about mid-day. Whenever possible,

workers and school children would return home for a short spell at dinnertime. On most days, and in both households, the aim was to provide filling and

nutritious meals that were within their means. Yorkshire puddings, eaten with a rich gravy made from the meat juices, were a favourite with everyone. They were served up before the main course with the hope that they would make the meat go further. This would usually be followed by a substantial pudding. Only on wash day was a full meal not provided; instead leftovers of mashed potatoes and minced meat from the Sunday joint constituted the main meal.

After Sunday lunch, Doris's mother used one of the large Yorkshire Pudding tins to bake a feather cake, which was similar to a Victoria Sponge but had more flour. Part of the cake was eaten at Sunday teatime and the rest cut up for the remainder of the week.

The Bond's family doctor was Doctor Morehouse. He would drive up the back street in his pony and trap, wearing a top hat and gloves. Marjorie can remember being told, that one time when he had called to see one of them, he put his top hat down on the kitchen table and went upstairs. Already on the table was a bowl of Yorkshire pudding batter, and her brothers said they were sorely tempted, but just managed to resist!

Marjorie remembered spending six long days in the Infirmary (LGI) in 1930, and the ambulance, which in those days you had to pay for, coming for her and bringing her back via the front street, the only vehicles ever to use it.

In 1929, Doris's mother was diagnosed with 'white leg' and so was bed-bound for three months. With so little in the way of government financial assistance, Doris's father had to continue to work and so he had to pay for a housekeeper. The second such person left when she was not allowed to bring a man home to visit. No one else was set on, so much of the caring of the family lay in Doris's hands, though Marjorie's mother baked bread for them.

With such a heavy domestic load and transport at that time still limited, goods either had to be obtained from nearby shops or delivered. Thus up the back road would come the coal man, a butcher who called twice a week, a greengrocer, grocers, a fishmonger and a man who sold yeast that was measured out on small brass scales. Marjorie remembered Walls ice cream was brought in a three-wheel cart peddled by a man who would shout out 'stop me and buy one'. Doris can remember buying triangles of fruit flavoured ice from the cart for a halfpenny. A dairy, that also sold ice cream, opened on the corner of Roper Avenue and Roper Grove.

As to other shops: a post office had been open since 1900 at the corner of Gledhow Avenue and Roper Grove, and later, other corner shops were to open selling groceries. Local, small-scale, market gardeners would sell their produce from their homes. Marjorie remembered buying delicious small yellow tomatoes from Mr Walker who lived at 17 Gledhow Avenue. Mr Walker, by 1927, had opened up a greengrocer's shop opposite his home.

An exception to the routine came on Christmas Eve when Doris's parents would reach Kirkgate Market in Leeds around eight in the evening. The market would stay open until midnight or later as a lack of refrigeration meant perishable goods had to be sold. The later it got, the cheaper goods became. Eventually Doris's parents would arrive home loaded down with a goose, oranges, vegetables, nuts and other Xmas fare. Each child would have a stocking hung up above the fireplace. In the stockings they would find new pennies, nuts, an apple, an orange and pencils on Christmas Day. There would also be one main present for each of them at their set place at the table.

## **Leisure**

When Marjorie and her brothers and sisters were growing up, it was considered perfectly safe for them to play out together unattended from an early age. A meeting place for the local 'gang' of children was the corner of Lidgett Lane and North Park Avenue next to the gas lamp outside Shepherd's farm. Here such games as 'kick out can' were played. This was a form of hide and seek where someone kicked a can and the child who was 'it' would have to run after the can whilst everyone else would 'get hiddy'. A favourite place to hide was 'the hollows' (see Figure 1). The children were often in trouble with the lamp-lighter and his inspector. Indeed, they were more scared of them than of a policeman! Marjorie's brothers were often 'collared' for cracking the glass in the gas lanterns.

A lot of local children lived in farm cottages and lodges belonging to local estates. Marjorie used to play with two sisters who lived at Lidgett Dubb, two farm cottages belonging to Pollard's Farm. At harvest time after reaping, the children would follow the horse and cart

to the farm, then ride back up the hill on the empty cart. In winter, sledging in Pollard's field alongside the slope on Lidgett Lane was popular. Both Marjorie and Doris enjoyed the communal bonfires on bonfire night held in 'the hollows'. Doris's memories of playing outside are of tying a clothes line to a gas lamp to be used for skipping with her friends, and playing hopscotch and whip and top.

For pocket money, each Bond child received one penny a week, but later this was increased to two pennies. Usually pocket money was spent on sweets. If they wanted to go to The Gaiety Cinema or Harehills Picture House, they would earn extra money by doing errands for neighbours.

Marjorie's family, like many others in the street, rented a nearby allotment where vegetables and fruit were grown to help feed the household.

The local churches played a big part in the social lives of both sets of children. Marjorie and Doris taught at St Edmund's Sunday school each week for many years. Both Marjorie and Doris remembered with pleasure church hiking groups and trips out, for example, to Ripon Cathedral.

### **Schooling and early days of work**

Marjorie began school in 1918 at Talbot Road School (nicknamed the Tin Huts). One day Marjorie, her sister and a friend were on their way to school when they helped to take the cows, from Shepherd's farm milking parlour, back to their field. It had rained heavily the night before so by the time they arrived at school they were very wet and were sent back home to change. Marjorie told me that she would no longer dare to go near a cow, but then it was just part of rural life in Gledhow.

About three years after Marjorie had left the 'tin huts', Doris started to attend that school. Doris remembers it being a very muddy walk to school. It was still a dirt road and pavement; these were separated by a single line of narrow paving stones which provided the only dry way after a wet spell. On the right, near to the school, ran a wide gully. Any water that froze in the gully was then used for sliding and skating.

At the age of nine Marjorie with one of her sisters moved to Gledhow School which was affiliated to St Edmund's Church. This school was very small with only two classrooms, the largest of which could be divided into two. The school took children up to fourteen and had three teachers: Miss Rice, who took the infants, Miss Brown, the juniors and the Head Mistress, Miss Pickles, the seniors.

The school celebrated Empire Day when a teacher would dress up as Britannia, and on St George's Day and Ascension Day the school would attend St Edmund's Church. The school had half a day holiday on each of these three occasions. Every Thursday the girls would go down to Harehills School at the junction of Roundhay Road and Shepherd's Lane to learn household tasks. These lessons took place in a little house in the playground.

Marjorie's mother did not consider that her girls were making 'good progress' at Gledhow School. The problem was that most of the children had always attended Gledhow, and they had been taught joined up-writing whereas Marjorie and her sister, at Talbot, had not. About three years before Marjorie finally left school, her mother decided to move the girls to Harehills School in the hope it would 'prosper us a bit better'. It was a much bigger school with better facilities. Marjorie started in standard seven, and was taught by Miss Chadwick. At fourteen, Marjorie went into Miss Porter's class which was the leaving class where pupils remained until they found employment. She left school at fifteen.

The first job that Marjorie tried was in the haberdashery department at Hitchins, a drapers sited on Briggate. As Marjorie stated she did not like the work, did not suit them, and was not upset when she failed the end of trial test. Her next job was at A K Kershaws which was, at that time, a small family-run factory that made cameras. In those days, before the Second World War, she described the working environment as 'one big happy family'. In 1929 Marjorie's starting wage was 10s. per week and she thought it was wonderful when she earned a bonus. At Kershaws she settled in straight away and stayed for the next sixteen years, which was the rest of her working life.

Doris, after leaving school at the age of thirteen, spent three months with a relative who ran a boarding house in Blackpool. Then when she became fourteen, she started work at Rhodes and Reads, a bespoke tailoring firm, where as an apprentice she received 6s. 6d. per week. When she left to join the forces, just before her twenty-first birthday, she was earning 35s. as a trainee supervisor.

Both Doris and Marjorie went on to lead full lives, and kept in touch with each other until Marjorie died in 2003. Doris still worships at St Edmunds church.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to dedicate this article to Marjorie.

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From left to right, Doris Beardsall nee Hopkins, who now lives in Manchester (born 1914 and brought up in Gledhow) with Marjorie and Doris, August 2002. *Author's Collection.*