

SCOTLAND PASSAGE

W.B.L.H.S. member Christine D'Agostino was born in Scotland Passage and shares with us her memories of what it was like when she was young.

"Scotland Passage was a little backwater in the middle of a town and it seemed almost rural in some respects. It ran parallel to Bull Street and the part right at the top backed onto Pitt Street. Here there was a large open area, with geese and chickens and I think there was a pond. I do not know who owned the poultry – perhaps it was the people who lived in Pitt Street as their houses backed on to the Passage. One of the geese was called Suzy. Every morning she would walk down to the bottom of the passage making lots of noise as she went. One of the hens was called Reddy, who, I was told, laid eggs especially for me!.

My Grandmother and Grandfather had moved to Scotland Passage shortly after their marriage in 1916. I believe they lived for a very short time at the top of the passage in one of a row of three houses and moved to no. 17 sometime before April 1917. That was where I (1944), my mother and my aunt were all born.

I never knew my grandad Bob Shelley as he died from an industrial disease a few years before I was born. He had worked all his life at Salters as a spring grinder. His father Joseph had worked there too and so did my own Dad, Jim Gill, for over fifty years.

Just below our row of houses, nearer to the High Street, there was a big yard where there were several houses standing sideways on to the passage. Almost opposite us there was a large concrete water holder which everyone called 'the static'. It had a wire fence around it. I suspect that it was put there in the war as a fire-fighting aid. Trow's back premises where the ice-cream was made to a 'secret' recipe were next door to our house and we always used their back entry as a short cut to the shops in Bull Street. Nightingale

Butchers backed directly on to my family home.

We left the house to live in Handsworth when I was about three but even then we were often at Scotland Passage and it remained a big part of my life.

There were some lovely trees in Scotland Passage and the memory of seeing one chopped down in the next yard to ours always stayed with me".

Death of a Poplar Tree – 1949

I didn't know why they were cutting it down,
But then, I was only four,
As we stood and watched the tree come down
By grandma's kitchen door.
"Why are they cutting it down", I said
"It's such a lovely tree?"
"It's dangerous, it might fall on us"
My aunty said to me
"And the leaves are very slippery,
They block up all the drains
And they make a terrible mess in the yard
In the Autumn, when it rains".
Then the saw was silent,
The poplar bent its head
I heard a thud, I gave a sigh –
I knew that the tree was dead.

CREAMY ROW was the name my Uncle Bill gave to Scotland Passage as the gutters sometimes ran with creamy coloured water which was a residue of the ice-cream making process being carried on there.

Anyone who knew West Bromwich in the mid twentieth century will remember Trow's ice-cream parlour in Bull Street. The memories are usually of sitting with friends (and sweethearts) in the room at the back of the shop eating ice-cream, with a dash of fruit syrup, from a tall glass. Or perhaps you bought a cornet or wafer to eat on your way to or from Dartmouth Park. This of course was before West Bromwich was re-developed. Trow's shop was demolished in the mid nineteen sixties along with the others on the same side of Bull Street to make way for the ring road.