

Memories of Dover

A Nostalgic Personal Perambulation.

Part Eight - Cherry Tree Avenue

Peter Sherred

To round off my series of perambulations in Dover like the last article on Castle Street I thought it appropriate to take another diversion off the main street and venture along one of the roads connecting the principal avenues of the one-way system. Cherry Tree Avenue is the street I have chosen for this last ramble. As a youngster I did not live near Cherry Tree Avenue and only, infrequently, went up or down it but whenever I did, I had the impression it contained a rather self-contained community with a good range of houses, shops and services but what can the little grey cells remember?

If one is turning right off London Road, travelling towards Buckland, on the right-hand side of Cherry Tree Avenue, walking towards Barton Road, I recall the vacant area of land now used as a taxi car park and I believe the first shop was a betting shop (Fred Hendy's) and next was a wool shop run by a Lilian Pelham who was a member of London Road Methodist Church. People could go into Lilian Pelham's shop and order however many balls of wool they needed, and she would happily keep some of them back for collection when required by her customers. That was typical of the helpful way small businesses operated in those days of the 1950s and 1960s. Where the current Aldi Store and carpark is located there used to be, until quite recent times, Thompsons Ford premises. Alan Thompson also ran the garage and petrol station opposite the now demolished sports centre in Woolcomber Street the site of which is currently occupied by the Travel Lodge and some shop units. The Cherry Tree Avenue site included a body

repair shop (for vehicles I hasten to add) and some SEGAS premises with a hall on the frontage which, if my memory serves me right, had a timber framed frontage - it was called the Garden Hall and served as a social club which was probably a popular and well-used venue. After this came the current row of four houses to Balfour Road, connecting Beaconsfield Road to Cherry Tree Avenue. In one of the four houses lived the caretaker of what was then called Barton Girls' School, Joe Hardy with his wife May. Joe was also caretaker of London Road Methodist Church prior to Jack Ash. Also living in this small block of houses was a jobbing plumber Walter Mills and his wife Lilian. They were the parents of Walter Paddington Mills, otherwise known as Sonny, who was also a well-known plumber in the town and who died as recently as 2006. Before crossing Balfour Road let me just rewind to the junction with London Road and recall what was on the left-hand side of Cherry Tree Avenue walking towards Barton Road. First was a large building that served as a depot for Ayers Coaches. East Kent Road Car Company buses and coaches had a distinctive livery of dark red, (or maroon), and cream but Ayers livery for the coaches was brown and cream. Dover Transport Museum has one such coach, 569 KKK, which



*Ayers Coach at Cruise Terminal
by Peter Sherred*

was displayed at one of the recent Cruise Terminal Christmas Markets. I recall these were described as 'luxury' coaches and were the

only private operators I remember in the town although there may have been others.

Next to Ayers was a transport, or haulage company, depot which operated under the name of Snellers and was run by Harold Sneller (helped by his brother-in-law Bill Hopper) being sited immediately opposite Balfour Road. Harold Sneller also had premises in Tower Hamlets Road at the junction with De Burgh Street. Neither Ayers nor Snellers remain in Cherry Tree Avenue and, indeed, when a road rearrangement with London Road was carried out, this involved the demolition of some old cottages on the London Road frontage and took in a largish garden area along the side of the former Ayers building. Currently Watling Tyres and the Kwik Fit buildings occupy the sites of the former depots for Ayers and Snellers although I seem to remember a KAP Datsun dealership may have made a brief appearance.

Back to the right-hand side and, after crossing Balfour Road, a corner shop (no 17 Cherry Tree Avenue) existed, currently a gent's hairdresser but previously it may have been a grocer's store. Although I cannot remember the name it may have been George Reason's shop located next to Cherry Tree Garage. In the mid-1970s this corner shop was an antique shop called Collectors' Corner.

Next up, Cherry Tree Garage which used to be Lewis Bros and, in more recent years, was



Lewis Brothers, Cherry Tree Avenue

owned and run by Keith Tutthill up to near the time of his death. The garage still operates under new management. I note from the picture that the corner shop adjoining has 'Furniture' referred to in its name above the shop window. Next to the garage is the River Dour which bordered a large car breaker's yard, Copping and Hollands, where I have many memories of going to find parts for my first car, an Austen A35. The site was packed with vehicles of all shapes and sizes and to the back of the site was a building or shelter structure. All was cleared out some years ago and its entrance on Cherry Tree Avenue is now totally overgrown. I guess the land may well have to be decontaminated if put to another use, such as residential, if petrol and similar substances remain in the soil. The car breaker's yard was, in planning terms, a non-conforming use in a town centre or residential area. Next along the Avenue was Barton Cottage attached to which was a much larger building I seem to recall was a chemist, named Pratts, latterly a doctors' GP surgery – run by Pankaj Premnath.

Between the chemist shop and Barton Path there used to be a splendid variety of small shops many of which have been converted into houses, most with bay windows thereby removing their shop frontages. Here I am a little hazy as to what the now converted shops were but there was a mixture of food shops and others. In the latter category I believe there was a tobacconist's shop, an electrical shop, a sweets and model shop called The Handy Stores (run by a Mr and Mrs Allen) and a clock shop or jewellers (run by Mr and Mrs Pendreich). Newman's was a DIY shop run by John Newman. The Avenue was well served with the variety of its shops including several grocers and fruiterers. The Cherry Tree fish and chip shop (once run by Mr and Mrs Tritton, which for many years had been operated by Mr. Randolfi who, retired two or three years ago, reopening as the 'Codfather' in 2022. Unfortunately, in the summer of

2023 the premises were badly damaged by fire and have yet to be re-instated.) came next after which I believe was a newsagent, a post office (a post box remains), a greengrocer's shop (another George Reason's?) with, on the corner with Barton path, a ladies hairdresser. This final stretch now comprises a Londis shop and the Tennessee takeaway food shop. Between Barton Path and Barton Road was/is an open area, the site of the former St Barnabas' Church on the corner with Barton Road. This is now the playing field of Barton Junior School.



St Barnabas Church, Corner Cherry Tree Avenue and Barton Road

This church and its hall had a noticeably short life span having only been built in the early years of the twentieth century before being irreparably damaged during the Second World War and finally demolished in the 1950s. I believe the site now forms part of the playing fields for Barton Junior School.

Back to the left-hand side of Cherry Tree Avenue and after Snellers' depot just over the river, the road surface crossed the river by way of a bridge. The river now flows beneath the road surface through culverts on either side of the impressive Co-operative building showing the wording 'Dover and District Co-operative Society Limited Established 1880' that can still be seen near the top on its side nearest to London Road. (The year is rather eroded so 1880 is my best interpretation.)



Co Op, Cherry Tree Avenue

The Co-op store with its butchers is now three shops at street level including Ann & Pam's florists and an estate agent. The upper parts are in residential use. After the Co-op building the current row of a dozen or so houses stretched (and still does) down to near Barton Road but were "topped off" by three or four shops which included, to my memory, another John Lukey wine and spirit merchant's store. This was what used to be called an Off Licence and John Lukey seemed to have a number of these in the town – opposite the Town Hall, in the High Street and Bench Street.

With all these outlets and the number of public houses in the town between the 1950s and more recent times, one could be forgiven for thinking Dover had a drink problem – at the very least a drink lust!

That is a quick canter along Cherry Tree Avenue – an erstwhile bustling, self-contained, community it seemed to me. It was always beautifully set off in the spring each year when the cherry trees along its length were in full blossom. That's all folks.

[My thanks to Graham Tutthill who kindly furnished me with the picture of Lewis Bros garage as well as jogging my memory where it had lapsed!]