



# **A Dawley Wench**

by

**Ann Rickus**

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I thought I'd ask you to come with me down Dawley High Street, not as it is now but as it was. So if you are sitting comfortably I'll begin. If you close your eyes you may well see what I am talking about, don't worry, I know you're not asleep.

We'll start our walk on the corner of Station Road where George Morris had his second hand shop and where many families bought their bedding and household good, our family included.

Next was a little cottage where you went down two steps to the fold (it had a little wall around it). Mr. and Mrs Barnett lived there with their two sons. She was Tom Jones' daughter and Tom Jones lived in a detached house nearby close to the Cosy Cinema. I used to love to go to go to Mr. Jones'. His door knob fascinated me. It was a huge black shiny knob in the centre of the door, I used to wonder how he could open the door with the knob stuck in the middle, must have been for show. He was a well-known Dawley man, a magistrate and local councillor. He also owned lots of ground and local pits.

Next stop the Cosy cinema, the local flea pit, where pop bottles were returned to the pubs in exchange for 2d which would get you in.

I've sat on the front row next to little Billy Lloyd. His feet didn't touch the floor. I've also sat in the back row in the double seats, but that's another story. When it rained or thundered you couldn't hear the film because it was a tin roof and it made a hell ova row. Gilbert Corbett did his best to keep the film rolling.



**George Morris's shop is on the right of the photo with the police station in the middle behind the "girder". The "girders" were sections of overhead gantry cranes manufactured at Horsehay Works and transported to the docks by road. They very often got wedged against Morris's house.**



**The Cosy Cinema**



**Little Billy Lloyd.**

Still keeping to the left hand side, across from the Cosy was Mrs Bray's chip shop. It had a coal fired chip fryer. She only cooked a few chips 2d a bag. Sometimes when you got to the counter she'd say 'Sorry I've finished for tonight'

After lighting the fire and getting the dripping hot you'd have thought she would have kept going. This is now used as offices I believe.

Next door is Morgan's paper shop. It's still a paper shop today. Mr. Morgan was a nice man and so was his daughter Joyce who worked for him, although she loved a fag.

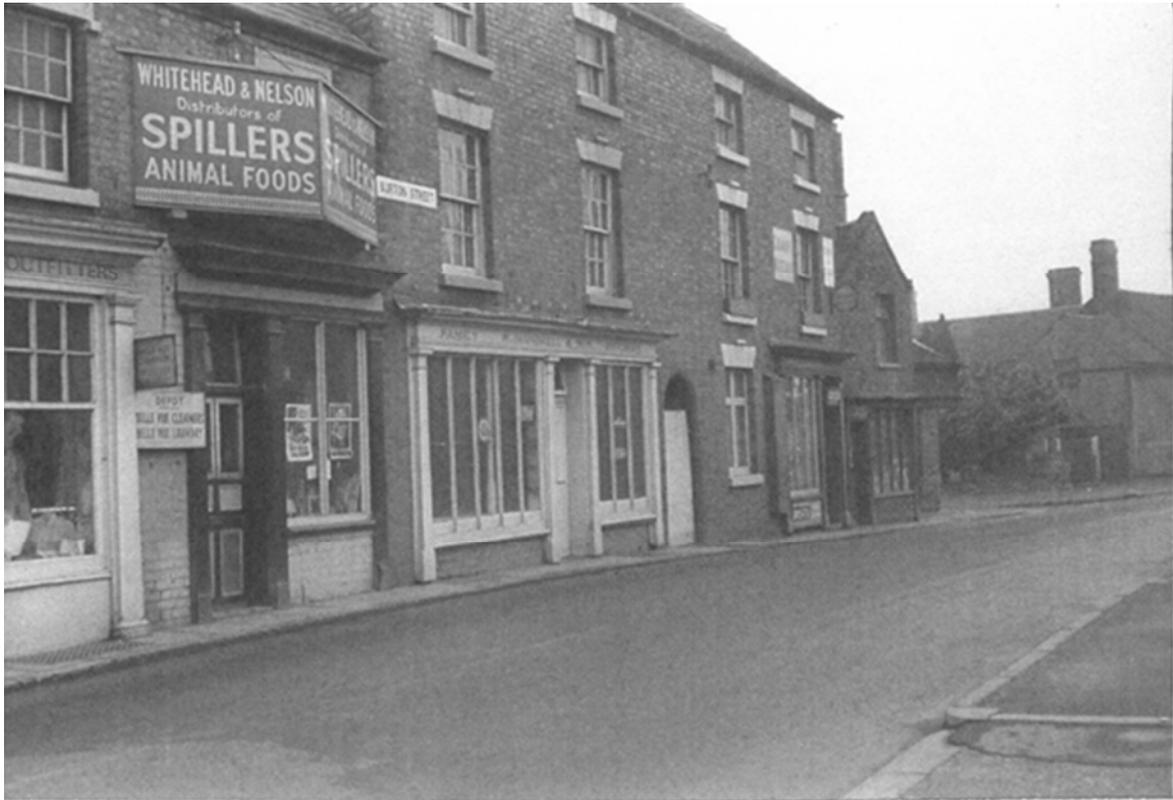
Next almost opposite was Polly Vaughn's shop (sweets and cakes etc.) She was a sister to Mrs Tom Ayres who had a shop lower down the street and we'll mention that later. Locally Mrs Vaughn was known as Mrs Rattles Vaughn. She never stopped talking. I remember my mam saying she never stopped to take a breath. Mr. Vaughn was just the opposite, very quiet. My friend Margaret Parr got a Saturday job there.



**The corner of Doseley Road with Frank Morgan's paper shop on the left. In the middle of the photo is Mrs. Bray's chip shop and the Cosy cinema was opposite where the cars are parked. Polly Vaughn's shop would be off the photo on the left.**

Next to the entry was Charlie Jaundrell (Butchers). He was a grand chap, nothing too much trouble. His dad was a butcher as well and they had a slaughter house down Chapel Street which they shared with my granddad, Dick Williams, also a butcher. One day Mr. Jaundrell Snr. was walking up the street with his white overall on and leather gaiters on his boots. Someone in the slaughter house had stuck a piece of cardboard on his back and it said 'kick me hard until I'm soft'. When I told my mam she said I should have told him, but I said he thought it might have been me.

Next was a little shop that belonged to the Elephant and Castle Pub, Auntie Beatie and Uncle Billy kept it? The last person I know who kept this shop was Audrey Bickerton. It was a fancy goods shop. I think today this room is incorporated into the Pub and if you look when you go out the windows are blacked out.



**Burton Street, Dawley with Audrey Bickerton's on the left, Charlie Jaundrell in the middle and Polly Vaughn's on the right.**



**The top of High Street with the Fishing Tackle shop, formally Melias's, on the left. George Street is the small alleyway between the tackle shop and the corner house in the middle of the photo where Mr Buttery lived. George Street also passed between Butteries and the Elephant & Castle public house.**

I don't know what Auntie Beatie would think about the Elephant today. She kept a good house across the road in George Street. Mr Buttery lived in the corner house which was until recently the Chemist Shop. He had a huge cancer on his bottom lip, but no one understood cancer in those days. I lived in no 1 George Street which is now used as part of the Fishing Tackle shop. It was Melias's Grocery shop and we paid the rent to Mr. Morgan the manager. He was a little fat man with a soft white moustache. I remember all the biscuit tins tilted with glass lids which you lifted and helped yourself. The shelves were always well stocked.

We'll look a little bit further to the Market Hall building. Mary Jones had her music shop and lots of sheet music clipped to a line across the window. Right opposite Mary's door was where I had to take the accumulator to get it charged for the wireless. Dick Barton, special agent and his assistant Snowy was my favourite. Sometimes we would be listening and the glass mantle would blow. sometimes mam had a spare, if not we had to wait to get one from Slaney Jones', lower down where the Cottage Hospital had its shop. Until recently it used to be Whitefoot's Ironmongers and Jean Robinson worked there for years.



**Looking down the High Street on the left side and starting on the right of the photo, we have Melias's grocery shop, the Market Hall and Whitefoot's Ironmongers behind the phone box.**

I'm just going to pop into Phillip's Grocery Store for some sugar which they will weigh up in a strong blue bag. We are coming up to Mrs Frank Jarvis' where we will get a bit of fresh cod. This was a Fruit and Veg shop as well as having a sloping tiled counter for a variety of fish which was delivered daily.



**The corner of Chapel Street and High Street with Jarvis's fish shop on the corner and Phillips's grocery shop next door.**

Across from Mrs Jarvis' was the Methodist Chapel .It was a lovely blue brick building. I went to Sunday school here and always took part in the Sunday School Anniversary. I always had a new white dress. Mam got it from Gertie Bullocks, a shop a little bit further down from the Chapel.

Well we must press on. Next to the Chapel was a row of houses which you had to go down three steps to enter. Sutch's Cycle Shop was here. Bikes were a very popular form of transport. Sometimes the only way people could get to work. Not like today where nearly every household has one or two cars



The Wesleyan Chapel, High Street Dawley.

Adjoining these buildings were Woolley's Storerooms which were painted green, like the vans they delivered stuff in were also green. Nice family Woolley's.

Now we'll pop in Gertie Bullocks. One side of the shop was drapery and hats; the other was books and stationery. Mr Bullock did printing. I remember my mam bought a hat off Mr Bullock, brown with a brim and a large pheasant feather cocked up. My dad said 'You're not coming out with me wearing that thing'. She kept it for years but never wore it.



**On the right of this photo is Woolley's Wholesale storerooms with Bullocks next to it. This is the white painted shop set back from the others. Panter's Fruitier shop is next and set forward from the others.**

Another Butcher's shop was next to Panter's. This is still a Butcher's shop today, and then it was owned by Martin Bailey. This also was family run, Jean, Rhoda, Marjory and Michael all helping out.

Next was Darrell's Grocery Shop, known as Bottom Darrell's. Later on this became a Cafe, Mrs McKee. Later on Lago's took over. Whist drives were held upstairs and you could hire it for parties.



The paper boy is standing next to Panter's and next door is Martin Bailey and next is the Central Cafe.

Come on lets pop in Watt's Cake Shop. My mam had a standing order for four custards and four dough nuts with the bread every Saturday. Louie was always leaving you to look at a nice pudding she had got in the oven. Florrie had a voice problem. There were two boys Jack and Charlie. Charlie was a Prisoner of War in Japanese hands, as was Connie's (now Maitchin) brother, but they traded in Dawley for years. Their shop has just changed hands.

Next was Slaney Jones Ironmongers. This shop had a unique smell about it. It also had a wall of small wooden drawers and Mr Jones always knew which one to look in. One held the nails or screws you wanted. He wore a small smoker's cap which I thought looked funny, a bit like Tommy Cooper. After Slaney Jones; Harris took over as paper and Decorator, There was a glass conservatory type building connecting the two buildings together. They still kept the Ironmongers but also started selling glass and china, a bit of class about it .



**Charlie Watts was also an agent for the Liverpool & Victoria Insurance Company and this is indicated by the brass plaque on the wall of the Watts's house. Next came the Post Office and next the house and shop of Ironmonger Slaney Jones; which later became known as Harris & Holland.**

Next was Variety Phillips second hand furniture shop. Tables, chairs, piano stools, you name it Phillips had it. Around the back bed linen mats, cups and saucers. Uncle Len bought a cast iron small saucepan and asked me to take the 6d it cost to Variety. So I went and said 'Mr Variety, Uncle Len sent the 6d for the saucepan'. When I went back and told Uncle Len Mr Variety had laughed at me, he at once said 'you weren't cheeky were you?' 'No' I said. I just told Mr Variety you had sent the money. No wonder he's laughing. His name is Mr Phillips not Mr Variety. (I still get things wrong today).

If there's nothing you want from here we will go into Bail's Grocery shop. These two brothers kept the shop spic and span and always had a chair for you to sit on. If you asked for something they hadn't got they would get it for you, no problem.



**Ball Brothers**

**Variety Phillips**

**Slaney Iones, China Shop**

**Slaney Iones, Ironmongers.**

Between Ball's Shop and Bache's Paper shop was an entry down to Portley Road. This is still here. Let's get our paper from Frankie Bache's sweets, paper, fireworks, and the lot he sold. Saturday was always of folks waiting for the pink paper. Do you remember that?

Next came Clayton's Yes another Butcher's Shop You'd wonder how they made a living, this is not the last one As we came up the street on the opposite side my granddad had his butcher's shop. We'll talk about that later. My granddad did his apprenticeship at Clay tons with old Mr Clayton. The Butcher's Shop is now the Council Officers.



**On the left is Portley Road with the sign pinned on the wall of Frankie Bache's paper shop. Next door was Clayton's butchers shop and house.**

Well I'm tired now so how about calling in The Lord Hill Pub for a glass of shandy and see Mr and Mrs Bill Terry who used to keep this pub, unfortunately Mr Terry drowned in Stirchley Pool. We'll continue up the street next time. Thank you

Remember we stopped the last time at the Lord Hill Pub well after refreshments we are ready to move on but first we must look at Captain Webb's Memorial. When my mam and her sister Elsie were small on the anniversary of his death they used to put bunches of flowers on it and have a drink of water out of one of the four lion's mouths. These don't work now.

Between the Lord Hill and Davies' Smallholding is a path leading over the Paddock Mount down to Langley School. You can still walk down there past Langley Terrace which was known as Rot Avenue.

Back to Davies' Smallholding, a black and white building with a wall all around it and cows in the field behind it. The Davies family were very talented. Mr Davies played the accordion and the piano and his daughter played piano and violin. I've been in this house with my mam and heard them play.

Next to Davies was Millwards. Mrs Millward was a staunch member of the Methodist Chapel. I liked her. She gave me my first Methodist Hymn Book which I still have today.



**Captain Webb's monument in-between the Lord Hill public house and Davies's House. The road to the Paddock Mound is behind the monument.**

Next to them was the Waste Paper Depot. The kids took home made trucks full of paper sometimes rummaging to find something of interest for the War Effort.

Across from Millwards on the opposite side Giles the Bookmaker had his business. You had to go upstairs when you wanted to put a bet on the Grand National. Don Dabbs was a bookies runner for Giles for some time.



**On the extreme right, (off the photo), was Giles's Bookmaker, behind the monument was Poole's Garage and the wooden bungalow. The lady on the left of the photo, about to cross the road, is Ann Rickus.**

On the corner was Poole's Garage and a lovely black and white wooden bungalow stood next to it. Then Mrs Edwards the second hand woman had a shop here for a while. Later it was Randles.

Up three steps and we enter Mrs Gibbs' Wool Shop. A small wooden counter and shelves stacked with wool and haberdashery. Mrs Gibbs always sat up in the corner behind a curtain but always stepped out when you entered.

Next door was Wooding's Grocery Shop. This was always spotless and always had a vase of cut flowers on top of the glass show case.



**The middle of the High Street which included Wooding's, the entry to the Rest Room and next to the entry was Jeff Ryder's flower shop. Next was a group of shops that included Walkers, Hilton's shoe shop and Bemrose the chemist.**

Next to this was an entry and at the bottom of this entry was a wooden building used as the first Dawley Rest Room. This entry is still here and leads you out to the car park.

My granddad had the next shop as his Butcher's business (Dick Williams). Jeff Ryder has it now for his Flower Shop

Next was Walkers. They sold biscuits but I remember their ice-cream best. It was wonderful.

Then came Hilton's shoe Shop Mrs May Attwood kept this for years. I see their daughter Grace around sometimes.

Now we go to Mr Bemrose the Chemist. He did his own dispensing. I wonder what happened to them. Mrs Bemrose was a nice lady. Later Mr Ogden took over who is still around.

At the back was a small slabbed area and at the front was The Crown Pub kept by Mr and Mrs Haycock. For years they kept a well-respected pub. I spoke to their son Don. He said he didn't know what they would think of it if they came back today. Don has a sister Betty who was brought up at the Crown.

Next-door was Tommy Ayres Grocer's Shop It was a large shop with two large iron supports and a large wood counter and a large bacon slicer at one end. My mam had her groceries from here. Percy Phillips who worked for Tommy would roll his eyes at me and would laugh as I used to blush. Tommy also has the little shop next door for bread and cakes. My Mammy used to go at 6pm on a Thursday night and scrub the shop floor for 5/-. She also cleaned the house through on a Friday for 10/-. She always said hard work didn't kill anybody.

Mr and Mrs Ayres had one son Tony who lives at Aqueduct. When I left school I worked for Ayres, both at the Dawley shop and the one he had at Lawley Bank just below the Queens Head.

Come now we must pop into Tom Rowley's if you want a suit or trilby or just a plain cap, they would soon fix you up.

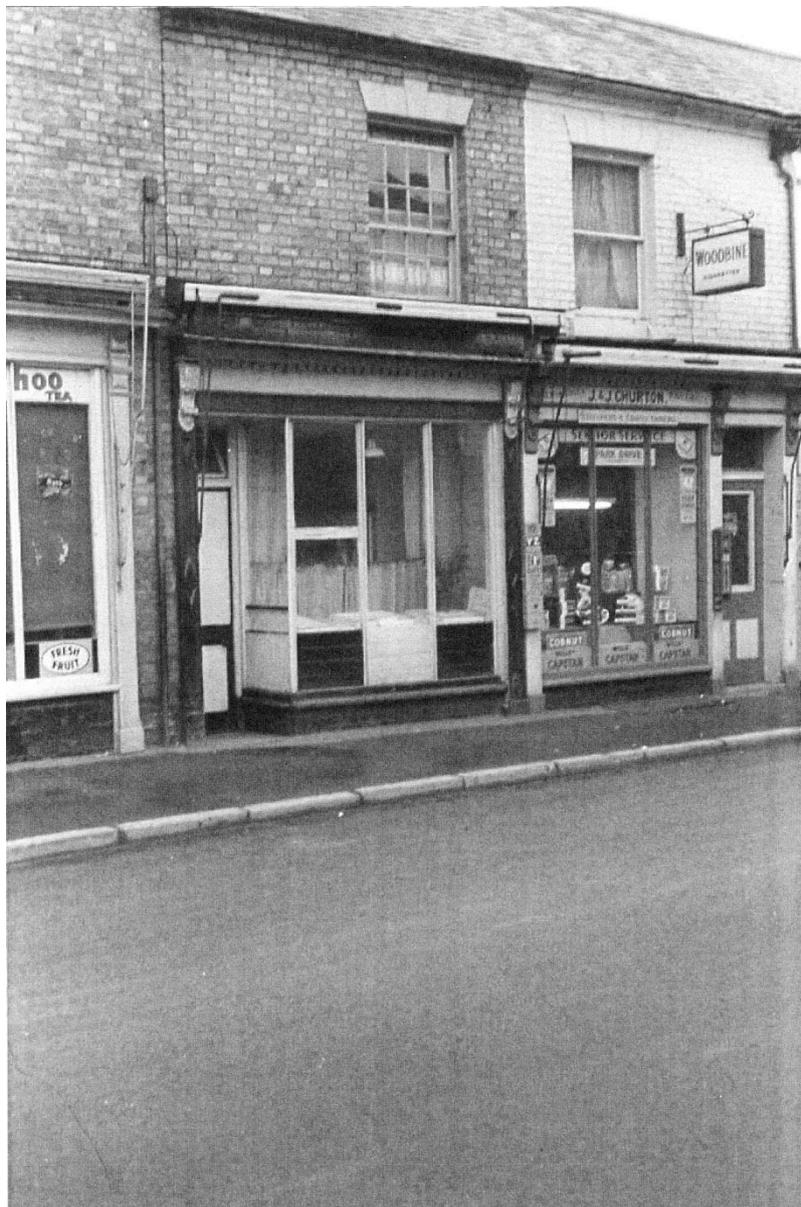
Do you want a paper? Well Robinson shop is right here. My mam always had the Woman's Weekly off him. Inside was always a little story of the Robin family. I think that is why the robin is my favourite bird.



The group of buildings in the middle of the High Street starting with the chemist and beyond that was the Crown Public House. The next group included Tommy Ayres's grocer shop, Tom Rowley's, Robinsons and behind the Midland Red bus was Arnold "Chippy" Rights.

After all this walking I bet you're hungry so let's call at Chippy Wrights for a bag of the best chips ever. Mrs Fry chipped the potatoes for him. I thought they called her Mrs Fry because she worked in the chippy, but it was her real name. I found out later on a Saturday morning,

I used to pop in the back and sit on a bench. The tables had red and white checked cloth on. Sometimes little Billy Lloyd would join us for a plate of chips. His feet never touched the floor.



**Arnold "Chippy" Rights fish & chip shop.**

Next was another Butchers, I believe I'm not sure. My mam used to call it Tick Tocks. Maybe someone can help me with this one. Next the Talbot Pub still is trading today.

Next was J R Smith's Grocers. Later on Burtons took over and Mr Preedy was manager. Mrs Preedy was a well-known lady and member of the Rest Room. In between was Meadow Road.



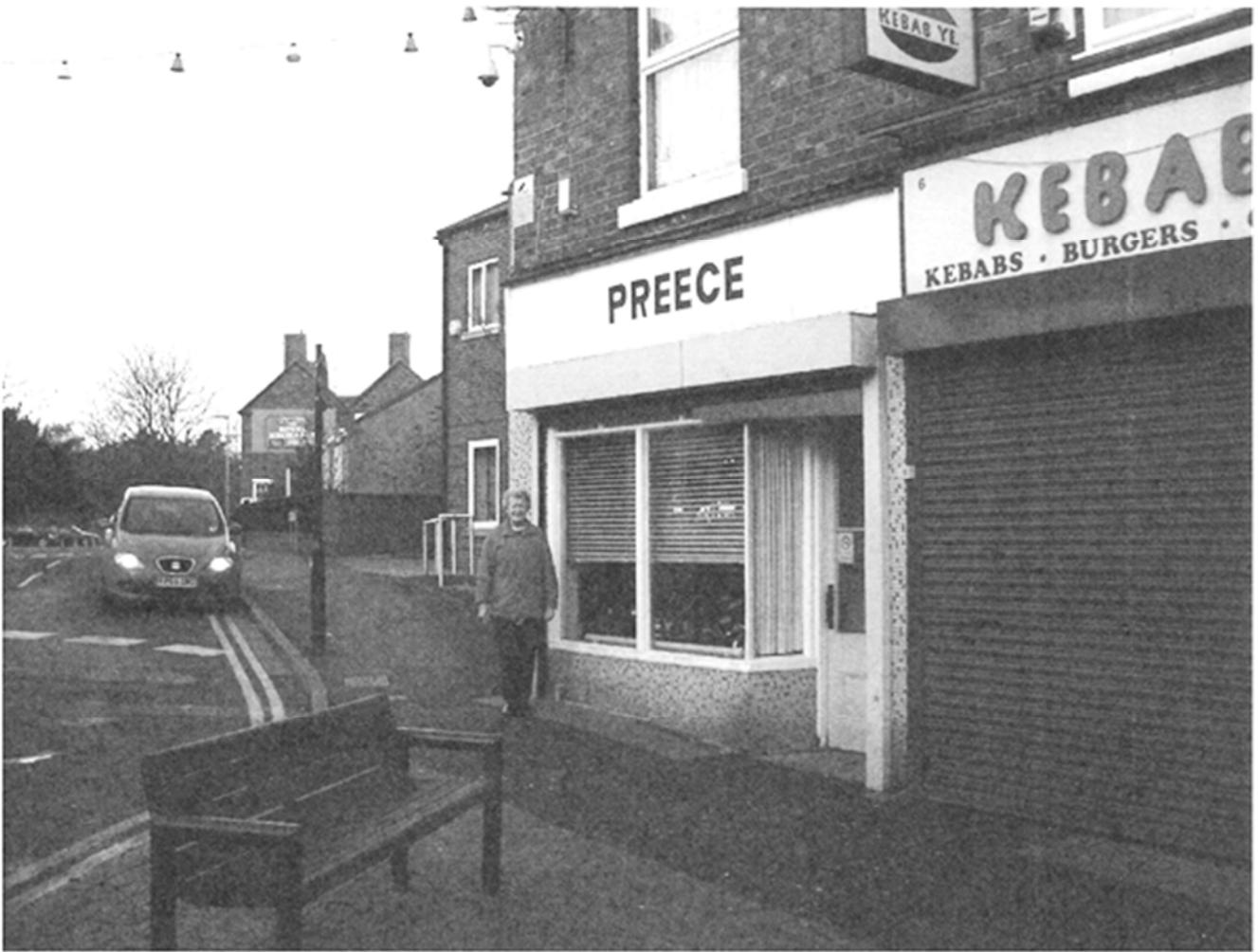
**Looking down Dawley High Street from the roof of the Elephant & Castle public house. Looking towards the left hand side and starting from the camera we have Preece's shoe shop. Next, and behind the white van, was Grace Millman's hair dressers, next was Darrell's grocers. The white fronted shop behind the blue car was Colin Evans's the draper's. Under the blue sun blind was Norgroves butchers and below that, next to Meadowell, was Mrs. Dabbs. Below Meadowell was J.R. Smiths with the Talbot Public House next to it.**

Then Mrs Dabbs had a small dress shop on the corner later on Kendall's had it as an Electrical shop. Now come on we can't pass Norgroves butchers without having a pork pie, the best in the area. Fred the son was a trustee of the Rest Room.

Now into Colin Evan's the Drapers. It was a lovely shop, well established and would get you anything. Mr and Mr S Evans had one son Peter who died very young. He was at the National School with me and I always called him Simon De Montford. I don't know why.

We're nearly at the top of the street. Next is Top Darrell's (this also was a grocers) and these shops had individual smells. There was another shop lower down on the other side. I talked about this last time. It was known Bottom Darrell's, both owned by the same person.

Do you want your hair permed? Grace Millman had her hair dressing shop here, each cubicle divided by a curtain. It's not like that today.



**Barbara Preece outside her shoe shop at the top of Dawley High Street.**

The oldest remaining shop in Dawley is Preece's Shoe shop. It hasn't changed since I was knee high to a grasshopper. Barbara has kept it exactly the same and you can always get good shoes from there. Then Mrs Summer's Leather shop, where you could get leather, tacks and rubber heels, sprigs and anything else you needed to repair your shoes. The smell of the leather was lovely as soon as you opened the door. Mrs Summer would cut off any size that you wanted. The shop it was on an angle, it kept getting struck by army trucks going through the street.

Next was waste ground which later on became the site we are in now Dawley Rest Room (now Dawley House)

## A chat about me as a little girl

I was born at Clee View, a row of cottages behind the Star paper shop at the bottom of the street known as Frankie Batches. Between Frankie's and Noah Ball's shop was an entry which is still there. Leading on to Portley Road a block of flats now stands on what was Clee View. From the upstairs window we could see the Clee hills. When the nurse brought me downstairs and put me in a clothes basket on the hearth, my Uncle Len who was pretending to be asleep got up off the sofa to look at me. He always said he saw me before I was washed and before my dad saw me. He was always good to me.

Mr and Mrs Shepherd lived in the first house. My Auntie and Uncle, Elsie and George Corbett in the second with a wash house in between. Then came Granddads. Then later Joan and Les Skidmore came to live there in Fanny Wood's cottage.

Next to that were Edie and Charlie Ayres. Edie was Fanny Wood's daughter. Fanny had 2 sons. Jack was killed in the Navy and Brian I believe lives in France now. He married Hilary Tonk's daughter, Cherry. I digress

Back to the row next to Edie's was Jenny Seabury and her husband who was as deaf as a post. Then came another wash house. We had a road in front of the house and long gardens. Jackie Hadley used to bring the muck dragoon just above Seabury house where there was a block of toilets.

Our toilet had 2 small holes in the seat. One large hole cut in the wood which mammy used to scrub after wash day with the water from the boiler. The seat was scrubbed white and the walls were white washed. Newspaper squares hung from a nail on the back door.

Jackie Hadley used to bring the muck dragoon to the end of the row late at night and carry the pans down to empty them in the dragoon. Sometimes he'd splash some over the road and Mr Shepherd used to throw through ashes over it. That's not all Mr. Shepherd did, he used to open the door and throw the shop bucket across the yard!

We lived at Clee View with my granddad Dick Williams until I was about 2 then we moved to no 1 George Street. It is now part of the Fishing Tackle shop. It used to be Melias's Grocers near to the Elephant and Castle.

Opposite our house was Annie and Jack Higgs, she was a little rotund lady who carried her shopping in a clothes basket on her head. Jack was taller, and he was as slim as a wisp. They were good neighbours. When Annie went to Wellington every Thursday she would open the door and shout

'Dust thou want anything from Wellington, Lawrence?'

Sometimes mammy did and sometimes not. Annie would sometimes bring us a rabbit back. When I was a little older, Annie had a huge collection of Staffordshire figurines and I used to go and wash them up for her. Mammy would say

'Doner let her do that Annie she might break them'

Annie used to say

'Doner mither if she does there only ornaments',

Luckily I never broke one. Jack used to let me do anything to him. I'd put a colander on his head and any hair that was poking out of the holes I would cut off. Mammy would grumble but Jack always said

'Leave the wench alone I doner care what I look like'

My brother was born in George Street and eventually we both went to the National School. I loved it especially Miss Wase, Nora Barnett, Mr Clayton and my favourite Arnold Tranter from Doseley. He was a good teacher. He used to walk from Doseley, by the Pipe works to school, walk back home for lunch, then back again. He always wore heavy lace up boots. He could be stern only with the boys never with the girls.

My Uncle Len used to drive the taxis for Jack Ashley. He used to pick up Nurse Thomas from Doseley and take her on her rounds. He wore a black cap with a shiny peak but when he took Nurse Thomas he put on a white cover. He used to pop by the Elephant and pick me up and take me to the National School. He used to stop the car get out and open the back door for me. I felt like the Queen although I could have walked it in 2 minutes.

When I was 11 I went to Wellington Modern School with Pat Owen and Janet Anderson. We loved it. All 3 of us did quite well there. Mr Shimeld was the Headmaster. He always called me Gertrude Lawrence. He said I reminded him of the actress but I hated being called Gertrude. I said 'Call me Gert and leave the rude bit off.



Looking up New Street from the top of the Dun Cow Bank. This new access road to the shops passes the old library building on the left. Clee View houses would have stood in the area behind this building.



The house on the right of George Street is number one and is now part of the Fishing Tackle shop at the top of the High Street.



### **Dawley National School.**

When my Uncle Len died in the 1950's from TB at Shirlett Hospital and left granddad on his own we left George St and once again returned to Clee View. We lived with him and stayed there until they were knocked down in the early 60's.

I remember playing with Janet Anderson, (sadly no longer with us) and Margaret and Beryl Bevan. Mrs Bevan loved having a house full of kids and Joan Holmes (Beryl's niece) who lived on the corner of what is New Road now. In the cottage we had some good times. We all went to the Wesleyan Chapel in the street and always took part in the Anniversary Service. Joan and I always did solos. Mr Dunn from New Road played the organ and Mr Bert Gregory was the choir master. It was a lovely old building but sadly it was declared unsafe and now the Christian Centre stands nearly on the same spot.

## The Anniversary Demonstration Day

We also took part in the Sunday School Demonstration which took place in August with a parade down the street and all banners flying and the girls carrying flower baskets, and tea and sports to finish the day. Oh Happy Days.

We started to get ready for the big day weeks in advance. Every Sunday we stayed later to practise our songs for the Anniversary Day. Mr Bert Gregory was our conductor. The adult choir was made up of men and women including Beryl Gregory and Averill Dunn whose father played the organ. I remember Mr and Mrs Bennett from the bottom of Chapel Street and their 3 daughters Muriel, Joyce and Freda. About 20-25 boys and girls were on the stage and I was selected with Joan Holmes and Margaret Parr to sing a solo verse and we practised at every opportunity. When the day nears we had to go to Wellington to buy a white dress and go to Colin Evans' for ankle socks, white canvas shoes or sandals which had to be whitened with blanco and then put on the wall outside to dry. I had to collect moss from Blues Hill and Mrs Gertie Jones who lived in George Street made up the baskets. Mine had moss in the bottom and then mixed flowers on top. There was a ribbon on the handle. I would then go home and have a bath in front of the fire and my hair washed and brushed and plaited with ribbons tied on the end. Then when spruced up, all dressed in white, basket in hand, I was off to Sunday school to have my basket judged. Sometimes if you won you got half a crown. We would go on parade through the street after meeting up with all the other Sunday Schools all carrying their banners high with pride. The smaller girls all carried flower baskets and the boys the guy ropes and banner. There was Little Dawley, Finger Road, Stirchley and the Rock to name a few. We marched behind our banner down the high Street to Doseley Road and the park. Mr Les Roberts and Mrs Howard Poole always helped.

I loved Sunday school. It stood on what is now the Co-op Car-park. We played games and put on shows. Mrs Harris from Harris and Holland did loads of work making costumes and helping us learn our lines. One song I remember, we were dressed in little dresses and curly wigs called Billy Girl and it went something like this:-

'Cheeks like roses, hair that's all a curl, wouldn't you like to be a baby girl?'



Happy Days



Some well-known faces taking part in the Dawley Demonstration.