

PAGES  
FROM  
BARBARA'S  
DIARY

## BARBARA'S DIARY

### 31st October 1981.

Mom and Uncle Cyril were talking about the Page family, and I said I would try to trace the family tree.

They started to remember Long Lane during their childhood, I wrote notes on the back of till receipts, then on the back of an envelope, then Aunty Doreen gave me a big roll of duplicate paper on which I wrote the list of names from Long Lane.

Uncle Cyril remembered going into Harris' bike shop and kept saying, "I wonder what I went into that shop for?"

Mom remembered playing 'ranty pole' - see-saw game with a plank of wood and a barrel - on a field opposite their home and they both remembered buying ginger beer in earthenware bottles from 'Aunt Suey's shop.

Then Uncle Cyril remembered buying 'Indian Brandee', but he didn't know what it was for!

### 2nd November 1981.

I couldn't start to trace the family tree because I would have to get duplicates of lots of births and death certificates from London at the cost of about £8 each, so I decided to find out more about the people of Long Lane. Mom is now 60, so 40/50 years ago would cover her life aged 10 to 20 years old.

To check the list of names I thought I would have to trace an Electoral Register, I could not find a telephone number of the library in Ross, Blackheath, so I phoned Long Lane library and found out that Long Lane was in Halesowen 50 years ago. I phoned Halesowen library who referred me to Dudley library.

I phoned the historian at Dudley after 2.00pm and the lady informed me that Halesowen - being in Worcestershire - would have archives in Worcester, so I phoned Worcester and found out that they have records from 1930 - 1939 but 1940 onwards records had been lost.

### 5th November 1981.

I sent a letter to 'letter page' County Express which read :-

I am interested in the life and times of people who lived in Long Lane, Blackheath (from Malt Mill Lane to Vicarage Road) about 40/50 years ago.

Do you remember "the peppermint man" who gave children peppermints and wore one of the first hearing aids?

I would like to hear from anyone who has any memories and any photographs would be appreciated.

I am the daughter of Florrie Page who lived at 335, Long Lane - next door to the "outdoor".

The letter was printed in the Express on 12th November.

#### REPLIES

A telephone call from Nellie Payne on 22nd November, Sunday.

A letter from Mercie Parsons via County Express on Monday 7th December 1981.

### 13th November 1981.

I composed a letter to 'Write In' at the Bugle, but after I found a page called 'Information Exchange'. Three rough letters later this is what I sent, as it was printed:-

I am interested in the life and times of people who lived in Long Lane, Blackheath (from Malt Mill Lane to Vicarage Road) about 40/50 years ago.

Do readers remember playing 'ranty pole' on a big plank and a barrel where Payne's garage was built, and then buying ginger beer in earthenware bottles from Aunt Suey's shop?

I would like to hear from anyone who has memories. I am a daughter of Florrie Page who lived at 335, Long Lane - next door to the 'outdoor'. All letters will be replied to. Yours faithfully, - then my name and full address.

The letter was printed on the 'Write In' page.

#### REPLIES

Phone call Sunday 22nd November 1981 from Nellie Payne now aged 77 living at Bromsgrove. She lived at the 'outdoor'. Her father made coffins in a shed in the back garden. She married at the age of 31. Her children had a rabbit and when they wanted to get rid of it - they cooked it and granddad enjoyed eating it.

Letter sent 30th November 1981.

Thank you for your phone call on the 22nd November I am glad I brought some happy memories of your childhood back to you. The Page family consisted of Ben, Bill, Harold, Fred, Daisy, Dora, Florrie (my mother) and Cyril. You probably remember Ben best as he is about the same age as you. I am a bit confused about your family - were you any relation to Fred Payne who built the garage opposite the 'outdoor'? Were you named Willetts before you were married, and did you take over the 'outdoor' after your parents? I have a list of some of the people that lived in Long Lane about 50 years ago, can you remember any names? I would like to hear from you, thank you again for phoning. Barbara Bowskill.

Reply 11th March

24th November 1981.

I thought of drawing a plan of Long Lane but realised that it would not be exact, so I decided to try to find an Ordnance Survey map. Chris suggested that I write to the Land Registry Office and composed a letter for me which read: -

Dear Sir, I am researching the area of Long Lane, Blackheath (Halesowen) and Blackheath in general approximately 40/50 years ago.

Is it possible to obtain, through your office any relevant details or photocopy street plans to further my project, if so could you furnish me with details of any costs that will be incurred and the correct procedure to apply. Thank you, Mrs. B.J. Bowskill.

The letter was addressed to - Shire Hall, Sansome Walk, Worcester.

The reply I received dated 2nd December read: -

Dear Madam, BLACKHEATH. Thank you for your letter of 24th November. The main problem with your enquiry concerns its date. First let me say that we do not have a street plan of Blackheath - indeed I would have thought that your local library would have been more helpful here. Our own records tend to be dated very much earlier than the 1930's. For instance we have tithe plans and awards for most of Halesowen but these are dated c. 1840. The same applies to most of the other types of records available. I can only suggest that you call at St.Helen's and investigate our holdings if you feel that you can usefully date your research from an earlier period. Yours faithfully, Margaret Henderson, Senior Assistant Archivist.

The letter came from Record Office, St. Helen's, Fish Street, Worcester.

4th December 1981.

I phoned Long Lane library to ask about old maps or street plans 40/50 years old and was referred to Mrs. Atkins, Dudley Archives. She referred me to Mrs. Horton at Halesowen Library where there should have been an Ordnance Survey map. While I waited for her to check I thought of trying Sandwell Library. When she said the oldest map was 1950 she agreed that a check at Sandwell Reference library which is in Smethwick was a good idea. I phoned Sandwell Central Library and asked for the Archives Department, I was put through to the reference library.

I was amazed to find out that they has an Ordnance Survey Map dated 1938. A photocopy copy of one section would be 10p!

I also asked about an electoral register to which she replied that records from 1940 - 1950 had been destroyed by a librarian, but she had no idea where the records were before 1940, so I informed her that 1930 - 1940 records were at Worcester, and she was very grateful for my information.

5th December 1981.

We went to the reference section of the Smethwick Central Library in High Street, Smethwick. They have survey maps of all the areas we were interested in.

Having asked the lady for a survey map dated 1938 she lifted piles of heavy maps out of a very large shallow drawer to find the one I wanted I took the map (25@ it is called) over to the table, but noticed that Blackheath island was an 'island' with no buildings on it, so I asked if she had an older map which she found out - dated 1885, but she put the other one away.

The 1885 map was the one I was after - buildings on the island and fields all around Long Lane. I then had to ask for the 1938 map so that I could have photocopies of both. When the lady photocopied the newer map I noticed it was dated 1935 and printed in 1937, and then lined up the older map - dated 1885 - so that could obtain 5 copies.

Chris came in so we had a good look around. There was an old copy of a Smethwick newspaper dated about 1875 and a drawer in the survey map container that was labelled 'Rowley Regis Tithes and plans'. There were lots of books around so we decided to return one day so that we could have some time to have a good browse around. On the way out we saw a selection of postcards of which two were of Rowley Regis Railway about 1920 and there is a list of 112 postcard photos which we will look at another time.

When we got home Chris and I had a good look at the differences between the two maps and later I noticed the house next to the 'outdoor' had an extra bit on the back and I realised that it was gran's house with the pantry on the back!

6th December 1981.

It was Sunday morning and Mom phoned to ask about the library, so we took the maps to show them on the evening. Mom used a magnifying glass to try to fill in the missing names, but she could not remember places in High Street, Birmingham Road and in Clement Road. When we got home Chris said we would have to try to fill in the gaps of the names, but I said that the only way we could get the exact names was through the Electoral Register at Worcester.

7th December 1981.

To our surprise and delight we received a letter from Mercie Parsons (via the County Express) with a list of all the names in Long Lane - filling in the gaps that Mom had forgotten.

## REPLIES

I received a letter from County Express which read: -

Dear Mrs. Bowskill, Regarding your letter 'Long Lane Memories' which was published on November 13th, I have now received the enclosed, which I am sure will be of interest to you. Yours sincerely, Richard Ryan, Editor.

Enclosed with the letter was a short sheet of paper 20" x 10 1/2" folded to show the centre back, there was a note which read: -

Dear Editor, This is a reply to a letter sent to the Country Express two weeks ago under the heading of 'Long Lane Memories'. As I have not got Mrs. Bowskill's full address I can't send it to her perhaps you could forward it to her. Thank you.

The letter was from Mercie Parsons - who owned the hairdressing shop on the opposite side of the road to gran's. On the other side of the sheet was two lists topped by this:-

Dear Mrs. Bowskill, in reply to your letter enquiry in County Express, I lived in Long Lane 51 years ago and remember all that people that lived from the Shell Corner to Vicarage Road. Then came two lists of names. Underneath was written: - I remember perming your mother's hair several times, also your Aunties - Dora and Daisy and your Uncle Fred, I remember your Grandma Page and your Granddad who used to breed beautiful canaries, he was blind, I now live as a geriatric patient in Parkes Ward, Hayley Green Hospital, Hagley Road, Halesowen, West Mids. If your Aunt Dora and Mom are still alive I would love to see them. I know your Auntie Daisy passed away some time ago, hope this information helps you in your enquiry, Yours sincerely, Mercie Parsons.

Reply 9th December

9th December 1981.

## See 7th December

I wrote a letter to Mercie Parsons in large handwriting which read: -

Dear Mrs. Parsons, Thank you very much for your letter. Mom was trying to remember the names of people who lived in Long Lane, but we had a lot of gaps, so we thought that we would have to go to Worcester to look at the Electoral Register, so you can imagine how surprised and delighted we were to get your list. Mom remembers you curling Aunty Dora's, Aunty Daisy's and her own hair with curling tongs for the Sunday school Anniversary. I have 2 maps, one dated 1885 with fields all around and the pub and shop on Blackheath island, and the other is dated 1935 with the streets and houses as you would remember it. I will send you a copy of each. I have only one other reply from the County Express which was a 'phone call from Nellie Payne, who used to live at the 'outdoor', so I have written a letter in the Bugle and I hope to have some letters soon. Now for the questions - can you write to me again to tell me all about yourself and your family 40/45 years ago (about 1930/1945) and about anyone you can remember who used to live in Long Lane? Was your father Mr. Parsons the Coal Merchant and did he wear a hearing aid? Mom and Uncle Cyril (the youngest Page) told me about old Joe who lived in a shed at the back of Gran's, and the men that sold peppermint and blocks of salt off carts, and washing days and podged rugs and all things that young people don't know about these days.

Could you tell me how you permed hair before modern 'perms' came out? Mom retired on 31st July this year after working for 19 years at Belgrave Engineering and my Dad has had an 'early retirement', so they are getting used to doing nothing. Aunty Dora now lives at Bewdley, and Uncles Ben, Bell and Cyril are all well and living around Blackheath. Uncle Fred died just before Mom retired and was missed from a family get together on Mom's 60th birthday. Thank you again for writing and I hope you have some happy memories of Long Lane that you can write down and send to me. Barbara Bowskill.

I had the 1935 map photocopied at Kirkland Stevens in the Netherton High Street. It was smaller, but had the important part on so Chris cut the 1885 map to match. I also put in a small note saying - Gran's house was opposite Paynes garage and next to the X which is a large entry to the 'outdoor'. It had an extra bit on the back that was Gran's pantry.

Re-wrote 24th February.

11th December 1981.

I received a phone call from the 'archives' at Dudley Library. The lady informed me that she had 2 maps dated 1904 and 1905, then she asked if I had contacted Halesowen Library about Ordnance Survey maps. I informed her that I had, but I was told that their maps only covered up to Mucklow Hill and the oldest map which was dated 1950. I told the lady however, that I had found Ordnance Survey maps dated 1885 and 1935 at Sandwell Library at Smethwick to which she was very surprised.

12th December 1981.

Chris and I went to Dudley and found the Central Library in St. James Road. I enquired about the maps and was directed upstairs to the Information Department. On asking the man in charge, he ticked off my

name on a slip, then unlocked and went into the 'archives' to collect 2 maps, for which I had to sign. We then took them into the information room to have a look at the maps, and found that were the same date but one was a continuation of Long Lane from the Shell Corner and the other was a replica of the maps I had collected. I asked for a duplicate of the area I was researching, but unfortunately the photocopy came out smaller than the others, so I have 2 photocopies to make up my 'picture'.

15th December 1981.

After deciding to 'suspend' my project until after Christmas, I thought that I might write a letter to St. Paul's Church for information so I sent off the following letter:-

Dear Sir, I am researching the life and times of people who lived in Long Lane. I have an Ordnance Survey map dated 1885 which has St. Paul's Church in it's own grounds surrounded by trees, and the old vicarage opposite with the grounds in front of it. I wonder if you would write to me with a resume of any details and memories that are available from as far back in time as possible. Have you any Parish Records available for inspection that I may look at and take notes from to further my project, I so I would be pleased to hear from you. Yours sincerely, Mrs. B. J. Bowskill.

I addressed the letter to the Vicarage, St. Paul's Church.

The letter was returned by the Post Office. The envelope was opened for my address and on the front was written 'gone away' 18/12/81. MLH 3710.

20th December 1981.

I received a letter from Mrs. Frances Tandy which read:-

Dear Mrs. Bowskill,

I lived at 333, Long Lane, Blackheath for many years, next door but one to your mother's family - Mrs. Neath lived in between. My name was Adams. I have been in your Grandma's house scores of times and remember very well your Aunt Daisy, Uncle Ben and brothers, also Dora and Florrie. I remember the times you speak of, my two younger sisters played 'ranty pole' with your mother and sisters. All the houses have not been demolished. My sisters were named Muriel and Doris. I left Long Lane in 1925 to marry and live in Old Hill, but now I rarely go out as I'm in my eighty fourth year and suffer from arthritis. My elder sister Alice will be eighty eight in January. It was lovely to read your letter in the Bugle as it brought back so many memories. I was a nosy little madam, going in and out of the houses on the yard. Your Gran's, Mrs. Neath's, Mrs. Bird's and the other side of the entry and Mrs. Clift's in the corner who had a family of boys and girls and played on the other side of the road; and all spent their pennies at Aunt Suey's shop.

Yours sincerely,

Frances Tandy.

Reply 4th January 1982

29th December 1981

Visited Uncle Cyril and Aunty Doreen. I took my 'project' book for them to read. Uncle Cyril said that the name Alec Hadley had been on his mind since we started talking of Long Lane, here some of his memories:-

Alec Hadley was a well-educated man who lived next to the 'outdoor' with his mother and his aunt - Miss Nicklin who owned the house. He sent some books round to gran's and they were very 'clever' books so mom said. He had a little brief case and was 'big' in an office.

There was a garage fire at the back of gran's in Victoria Road at Blackheath Transport Company (he thinks) which ran mostly coaches, but they had a few lorries. The fire was in the middle of the night and the fire brigade was sent for. The fire station was situated at the top of Long Lane, which is now a scout's hut. This incident happened about the same time as Uncle Ben's Bag Factory burnt down, and they may have been recorded in the County Express.

Llewelyn worked at Lench's, walked around with his shirt wide open and singing all the time. He came into gran's back yard and the chaps chased him off, but he said he only wanted to know if they had some old trousers. He was forced to leave his lodgings so Mr. Lench got him lodgings in town. He eventually walked around asking people for money.

A popular newspaper around in the 1930's was the Birmingham Gazette.

King George's Jubilee, Dora in bed with a broken thigh 1934-35.

Mom remembers King's death and Duke of Windsor's abdication.

Gran fell off a bus and had a big hole in her leg which she packed with liquid paraffin. Granddad went blind and Uncle Cyril wounded at the same time.

Mr. Neath was a painter and decorator. One day Uncle Cyril saw him painting a name sign for a door, but then he ran out of the house with it and held it under running water in the brewhouse. Uncle Cyril could not work out why he had washed the painting.

Joe Southall was nicknamed 'Stenmmer' because he stuttered. His job was tarring roofs etc.; he used to heat the pitch in a big tub. After he had gas tarred the fence at Parson's coal yard mom would stand 'hours' squashing the bubbles in the pitch.

The 'Shell Corner' was so called because of the 'shell' which was put on a piece of land at the corner of Malt Mill Lane as a memorial to the soldiers of the first war, and a seat was put there. The shell was taken away

during the second war when metal objects and iron railings were required for the 'war effort', to be used for making armoury.

There were two wells on the yard, one was between Clift's and Bird's and the other was between Neath's and Adams'. A bucket on the end of a long rope was used for getting water from the well, and when they were not used they were covered with pieces of wood. Cats often jumped on to the boards and fell into the well and drowned, and Uncle Cyril said that cats had to be fished out of the well with the bucket before the water could be fetched out.

3rd January 1982.

We went to Bewdley to see how Aunty Dora was, after hearing from Ann (her daughter) that she had been very ill. I took my project folder just on the off chance that the conversation may work around to her childhood days. Unfortunately we arrived just in time for mom to go to the hospital with Aunty Dora as her condition had worsened, but I later had an offer from Ann (who lives in Stourport) to become my 'Worcester Record Office researcher'

Aunty Dora passed away Friday 15th January 1982. The funeral was on 22nd January at All Saint's Church, Bewdley at 2.30pm.

4th January 1982.

See 29th December.

After my Christmas break I got to work again and wrote a letter to Mrs. Tandy. It read: -  
Dear Mrs. Tandy, Thank you very much for your letter. Mom (Florrie) and Uncle Cyril (the youngest Page) were remembering Long Lane when they were children and I was so interested that I decided to find out more. I have had a reply from Nellie Payne who lived at the 'outdoor' and a reply from Mercie Parsons, the hairdresser, from opposite Gran's.

Mom said that it was normal for children to go in and out of all the houses on the yard, it's a shame that people are not so friendly these days. I would like you to write to me again to tell me about your family when you were young. Were you and your sisters born in Long Lane? Do you remember having gaslights, and using the well for water? Mom said bonfire nights were spent behind Garrett's with a wind-up gramophone. Any information about the people of Long Lane and the shops up to the Shell Corner (do you remember the 'shell' with the seat by?) from you and your sister would be very interesting. Thank you again for writing and I hope it has brought some happy memories to you. I hope you had a very happy Christmas and I wish you well in 1982. Yours sincerely, Barbara Bowskill (Mrs.). I enclose a stamp for your reply.

I also decided to write to Bell's Garage to see if they had any information and to write to the Congregational Church.  
Re-wrote 11th March

The letter sent to Bell's Garage which probably would go to the garage at the top of Long Lane read as follows:

Dear Sir, I am researching the life and times of people who lived in the Blackheath to Shell Corner part of Long Lane 40/80 years ago. I believe that the original Bell's Garage was built between Church Street and Green Lane, then later rebuilt further up the road towards the Shell Corner where it is today. The original garage is not on the Ordnance Survey map dated 1904 that I have a copy of, but the present garage is on a map dated 1935, so I would be grateful if anyone could let me know when the garages were built, and also if the name 'Bell's' is a persons name or a trade name. Any information about the garage and if any photographs exist of the garages would be gratefully received.

Yours sincerely, Mrs. B.J. Bowskill.

Reply 12th January

The letter to the Congregational Chapel read: -

Dear Sir, I am researching the life and times of people who lived in Long Lane. I have a copy of an Ordnance Survey map dated 1885 which has a building on the site of the Congregational Chapel, on a map dated 1904 is the 'Tin Chapel' - as I believe it was called - and on a map dated 1935 the brick built chapel is situated on the corner. I wonder if you would let me know if the first building would have been a chapel and of the dates the other two chapels were built. A 'resume' of any details and memories that is available from as far back in time as possible, and records you may have that I may look at and take notes of to further my project would be appreciated. Yours sincerely, B.J. Bowskill

Reply 13th February.

6th January 1982.

When we visited Uncle Cyril on 29th December I had mentioned that I was disappointed with the response from my letter published in the County Express and the Bugle. Aunty Doreen told me about the free newspaper that is delivered every week around Halesowen and Blackheath which was the Stourbridge and Halesowen News, so I wrote and sent off this letter to them: -

Dear Sir, I am interested in the life and times of people who lived in Long Lane, Blackheath (from Shell Corner to Blackheath island) about 40/80 years ago. Do any of your readers remember the 'shell' memorial with the seat near it, or Homer's Photograph shop, and I am trying to date a fire at a coach company in Victoria Road and the time the lion escaped from a circus and was caught in 'Lion Hill' on Blackheath island. I would like to

hear from anyone who has any memories and any photographs would be appreciated. I am a daughter of Florrie Page who lived at 335, Long Lane next door to the 'outdoor'. Yours faithfully, Mrs. B.J. Bowskill.  
I added - Please print my address for replies. Thank you.

The letter was sent on the 12th January to:-  
Stourbridge & Halesowen News,

12th January 1982

See 4th January

I received a letter from Bell's Garage signed by the Company Secretary which read: -

Dear Mrs Bowskill, Thank you for your letter of the 4th January. We trust the following information may be of help to you in your research.

The original wooden garage was built in 1928 by the founder W. Bell on the piece of ground between Dr. Graham's (surgery) and Green Lane. In its place now is a firm making garden sheds etc., the principal trade at that time was motorbikes to the early 3 wheelers and small cars. In 1938 we moved from there to new premises a little further up the road next to Midland Counties Dairy. In 1959 we moved again to our present premises at the top of Mucklow Hill. The business is still a family one, with WE. Bell as sole proprietor until around 1963 when we became a limited company. We have of course numerous photos, but you will appreciate that these are regarded somewhat as family heirlooms that we could not release. What we can offer you is the enclosed old newspaper print which we believe will give you all relevant information. Yours faithfully, pp W. Bell & Associates Ltd., [a scribbled name] Co., Secretary.

With the letter was a brown coloured piece of newspaper dated Saturday February 28th 1959 which was a double page of the County Express.

A full-page advertisement of Bell's Garage headed '30 Years of Progress' a sketch of the 'new super garage' at Mucklow Hill, Halesowen.

Four photos of Bell's Garage 1928 - 1933 shows the wooden garage with motorbikes in a row outside, 1933-1938 has an extension with an advertisement board above the entrance to a yard. 1938-1959 is a photo of the new garage built further up the road as it is today. The fourth photo is a garage at Bewdley Hill, Kidderminster that has now been demolished.

Reply 24 January

14th January 1982.

A letter arrived from Mrs. Doris Siviter. It read: -

Dear Cousin, I saw your letter in the 'Bugle' I am your second cousin really being the eldest child of Frank and Lily Page who lived until I was 23 in Southwick Road. I well remember Uncle Jack who was my father's brother, and Auntie Annie. Your mother I remember too, she was younger than me, I was born in 1914. Like Uncle Jack we were the poorer relations of the Page family. Only Uncle Will is living, he is 89 and lives in Bromsgrove. I do keep in touch with him, he is quite well, I write to Ivy, she is Uncle Ben and Auntie Ada's eldest child, they own the Bag Factory in Beaumont Road, Ivy lives at Highley. Ida who lives in Olive Lane and I exchange Christmas cards. Auntie Becky lived around London, she died about 4-5 years ago, her youngest daughter Betty still lives there, we see each other usually in the summer when she and Ken, her husband, stays here for a few days.

I take the Bugle because although I have moved around a lot I am still a Black Country wench. My husband came from Beet Street, Blackheath, now we talk of all the old shops, the outdoor licence next door to where your mother lived, Paynes garage on the other side of the road, Haywoods fish shop, the drapers next door where my mother would put things by and pay a shilling or so a week to keep Howard my brother and me clothed, also Groves' shop, always a nice shop to go to. Stirman's on the corner, Nellie Moores fish shop, Winebushes, Townsends, where my dad bought his Woodbines, Rileys the chemist, had a lovely smell about it, and Honeysetts where I fetched the bread. Although we were poor, we were cared for with love, my mother took in washing; a job I hated was fetching it dirty, then taking it back clean. How my arms ached trying not to crush it after mother has starched and ironed it with care, all for a two shilling piece. My mother was a saint if there ever was one. I know Ben is alive because last summer while on holiday at San Bay, Weston-Super-Mare we met some people who lived next door to him in Graham Road. Harold died a ~~line~~ time ago, he married a girl from Bewdley, Dora, I think that was her name had a heart condition, I remember she had her bed in the front room, she married and lived along Kent Road, she died some years ago. Florrie I do remember, but the War seemed to put an end to our family connections, what a pity this happened, we will never know what we have lost by being so wrapped up in our own families when we married. You must be a Page to want to know all about the old days. During the war my husband worked at Hall's, New Road, Netherton. I have lived in Smethwick, Quinton, Guernsey and around Worcester but never have I found warm hearted folk like the Black Country people, they are the 'salt of the earth' we have only lived here in an old folks bungalow for 12 months, 2 miles out of Stourport. You must visit us. Doris Siviter.

Reply 25th January.

24th January 1982.

See 4th January

12th January

I did some overdue letter writing.

To Bell's Garage I wrote: -

Dear Sirs, Thank you very much for your letter dated 8th January. The information you have given me will be of great assistance to me research, and the newspaper print with its pictures of your garages was very gratefully received as it has given me an insight of the life and times of Long Lane. Thank you again. Yours sincerely, B.J. Bowskill.

Mom talked of Riley's Chemist and Opticians on the Shell Corner. Mr Riley has an Opticians shop and a chemist shop next to each other in High Street, Blackheath, so I decided to write: -

Dear Mr. Riley, I am researching the life and times of people who lived in Long Lane 40/80 years ago. You recently recognised my mother as a 'Page' from Long Lane when she visited your Optician shop in High Street and you said you used to make spectacles for my grandfather who was blind. I am interested about the shops on the Shell Corner, including the chemist shop and the optician shop next to each other owned by your family. Could you write to me about the two shops, and was your father the Optician or the Pharmacist when you were young? If you have any memories of Long Lane when you were young I would be grateful to hear from you. Yours sincerely, Mrs. B.J. Bowskill.

25th January, 1982

I replied to Doris Siviter's letter: -

Dear Doris, Thank you for your letter which was very interesting to read, I am sorry for taking so long replying to you. The Page family consisted of Ben, Bill, Harold, Fred, Daisy, Dora, Florrie and Cyril. Harold died a long time ago, Daisy suffered from a hole in the heart all her life and died some 13 years ago. Fred died suddenly last July and sadly Aunty Dora passed away in Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham on Friday 15th January from a tired heart/Diabetes and kidney failure, having heart trouble for about 6 years. Dora and her husband Fred used to see Ivy from the farm at Highly and I would be grateful if you would let Ivy know of her death. The Pages that are left are Ben and Cyril who live around Blackheath, Bill, and Florrie (mom) who live 'up the hill' in Rowley Regis. The story started when I decided to trace the Page family tree and then mom and uncle Cyril talked of the days when they were children so I decided to find out more. I would like to write to 'Great' Uncle Will to ask him if he remembers relatives of his mother - Prudence, and his father - John and where they lived to help me trace the pages, and of course any memories he has from his childhood. I would love to hear of any memories you and your husband have your own streets where you lived, because any details would be interesting to add to me 'book' I don't know if it will every be published, but I shall try if I can collect enough information, because I want my children to read about mom's childhood and the really 'good old days' - as you say - you were poor but loved. I don't think I could wash other people's clothes like your mother did. I hope to hear from you soon. Barbara Bowskill.

Replies 9th & 10th

February

23rd January 1982.

Mom gave me 25 old photos of the Page's and some information.

28th January 1982.

Uncle Cyril 'phoned to say my letter had been printed in the Halesowen News.

29th January 1982.

During the evening I had a 'phone call from a Mrs. Stirzaker. Her name is Norweigen but her husband comes from Birmingham. Her name was Williams and she lived in Masters Lane - 2 doors away from the County Inn (locally called The Clock). She had read my letter in the Halesowen News and said she thought the lion had escaped from a coach which returned over down the 'Tump' and she also remembered the 'Shell'. I said I had written to Mr. Riley and she told me that Mr. Riley's mother kept a little chemist shop opposite Maple Road, just inside Long Lane. Mom had a chat to her. Mom and Dad remembered the trams that came up the 'Tump'.

30th January 1982.

Saturday, I received two letters through the post - the first read: -

Dear Mrs. Bowskill, I have read your letter in the Stourbridge News, also in the 'Bugle'. I can remember the shell on Shell Corner, Long Lane, Blackheath, also Mr. Homer's Photo shop in Long Lane, opposite to Dr. Robert's at that time, nearly opposite Church Street. I can remember Payne's Garage, and I think their son or a relation kept the 'outdoor' next door to where your mother lived. Do you remember Mrs. Cheeseman who lived in the cottages opposite the Congregational Church? The Odeon Picture Palace was at the top of Long Lane; also there was The Stag Inn at the top of Mucklows Hill and a small coffee house. I think the lady who kept this was Mrs. White. Can you remember Cathy's hairdressers nearly by Payne's Garage? She lives at Coombe Martin now. I'm sorry I have no photos. I was Adams' daughter who kept the sweet and tobacco shop, No.2. High Street, Blackheath. Yours truly, Mrs. M. Grigg. P.S. My age now is 68. Anyone who knew Blackheath can remember our sweet stall in High Street on a Saturday night.

## Reply 1st February

The second letter I received was from Mrs. A. Lowe, it read:-

Dear Mrs. Bowskill, I have again read your letter in the Halesowen News, the last time I read it I started to compile a list of people I could remember, as they have changed quite a few times, but funny enough I kept the list, the reason I didn't send them, my husband threw the paper away, and I hadn't taken the address down, anyway. My Name is Annie Lowe, nee Merris, as a girl I lived in Narrow Lane, when I married in 1940 I went to live just above your mother at 323, which was vacated by Mrs. Mole who used to knit socks, it was a small shop, she had 2 sons. I remember your mother and father very well; also your sister Daisy Page and Nora Garrett were at school the same time as me. Your brother married Doris Southall whose father was a brother to my Aunt Lizzie from Thatches Farm in Narrow Lane. I remember well the Shell Memorial, also the fire in Victoria Road. I can't remember the Lion escaping although when I was starting work I worked for your Uncle Ben Page at the bag factory. Can you remember that burning down? Ivy Page once wrote a letter to the Bugle, and I was going to write to her, but the paper got thrown away before I got down to it. Beatty and Frank Stevens are in these flats also Will Bird, Mrs. Barnsley had one, but she died 2 years ago. In the other block of flats at the top of Malt Mill Lane there's Mrs. Adams, Florrie Holloway, Marion Rock, Alex Nichols and Len Fereday. I think this is all I can think of at the moment, but I hope it will be of interest to you the little bit I know. Yours faithfully, Mrs. A. Lowe.

I sent a letter to Mrs. Stirzaker -

Dear Mrs. Stirzaker, Thank you for your telephone call yesterday. I am grateful for the information you gave me. I wonder what sort of 'coach' the lion was in, or would it have been a cage-on-wheels. I have an Ordnance survey map of Long Lane dated 1905 which has Masters Lane and Cakemore Farm on, I will send you a copy when I can, and I hope it will be of interest to you. You said your maiden name was Williams, but I would like to know your first name and your age (I have found it's the men who hide their age) so that I can write about you in my 'book', perhaps one day it may be published! Mom (Florrie Page) had told me about her childhood - she is 60, about people she knew, her school days, the war years, rationing, Christmas' and the tradesmen with their carts selling milk, salt and peppermint. My granddad used to run a fish and chip shop and sell wet fish round the streets many years ago, I bet you can't remember that because my Mom doesn't remember the fish and chip shop. I would like you to write to me so that I can keep your letter for reference. Please write down any memories you have about your childhood and send them to me, I shall be very happy to receive a letter from you, Yours faithfully, Barbara Bowskill.

## Reply 9th February