

LOOKING BACK 2

Information regarding areas of Spittal These are his recollections in his words.

West Street – starting from the Billendean end.

First large house was called the Old Manse, which was possibly the Manse for St Paul's Church before the Manse was in Main Street. Opposite was what locals called Dickie's Hall where Dickie Rowantree (an excellent local Councillor) kept two vans for Mawson Swan who delivered goods locally.

Next along was the Johnston family who kept cows and a horse in the byre and stable up in the yard at the rear of the house. Ralf Johnston was the horse man, Simon looked after their land on the Cemetery Loaning. Lizzie delivered milk twice a day along West Street with a large, lidded pail and she measured out the milk into the householder's jugs.

Nearly all the houses only had gas, so refrigerators were not available then. Further along on the other side was Fanny Wales who sold lemonade and other items from her front room.

Going further along on the right was Unthanks, which was run by the Dixon Family. They sold logs and paraffin for people's oil lamps and also dealt in scrap metal. They had two lorries and one was retained especially for the once weekly trip to Holy Island with paraffin and goods for the Island's population. This was before the causeway was built and the sea water rusted away the metal on the lorry as it crossed the sands.

A few miners worked at Scremerston Pit and lived in West Street where once a month the coal lorry from the pit dumped a load of coal on the road outside the miner's houses as this was their free supply for the month from the pit. It was carried into the houses in buckets and often sold to neighbours as the miners could not use all the coal supplied.

During the second world war there was no street lighting and when it was restored at the end of the war the local lads used to climb up the lamp posts and light their cigarettes from the mantle in the gas streetlamp.

In the large gardens behind the houses were many pigeon lofts as this was a favourite pastime for many of the men. Spittal Homing Society held a competition for the winning pigeon in the weekly race with a cash prize.

At the end of West Street was an opening up to the Bank Heads which was a path running from the Billendean along to the Side Cutting behind Spittal. This opening was called Jackie's Opens. Most of the houses in the original West Street were demolished and the council erected houses, and later on flats on the areas where they stood.

Names of some of the families in West Street then were Miller, Patterson, Johnston, Dixon, Cowan, Sykes, Skelly, Moffat, Cromarty, Grieve, Malcomb, Wales, Makepiece, Fettes, Knowles, and Wright.

Middle Street starting from the Billendean end.

First were two old buildings where fishermen stored their nets. Further along was St. Paul's Hall which was used for many events and still is today. When victory was declared after the Second World War, the ladies from West Street and Middle Street organized a party for all the children with tables along the middle of the road outside the Church Hall and provided a great party to celebrate the event. Further along opposite the Council Flats is now a garden was where the children from both streets held their annual bonfire. This was a great annual community event with the Dixon Family supplying a wind up radiogramme to provide music for the event. Fireworks were organized and supervised by various adults.

Opposite this area was a local man Peter Robson who decorated many local establishments. Further along was a garage where Martin the Bakers stored their delivery van which was also a back entry to the bakehouse. There used to be a cottage which stood in the middle of the road between West Street and Middle Street which has now been demolished. Along from the cottage was Johnston Place which had stables behind to house the many horses which were around in Spittal in years gone by.

Going over the hill we come to Forte's ice cream and chip shop. This was a very popular chip shop and Forte's ice cream vans covered all the local area including the Promenade. When local children went guising to the Forte Family at Halloween, they always came out with large ice creams as a reward for their performances. Next to Forte's shop is an alleyway leading up to the side cutting. In behind Forte's was the old mill where George Smith, who used to work at Black's Spade works, stored items and Dan Richardson turned out some first-class wooden objects on his lathe.

During the Second World War the local constabulary were called upon to guard all the crossings and bridges when the Royal Family were travelling by train through the region. One time when the train was travelling through some local people heard about it (it was supposed to be secret) and were standing looking for the train at the back bridge when the train passed through. King George was sitting having a meal when the train passed through and when he saw the Spittal people waving he waved his spoon to them.

During the floods in 1948, water poured down the alley beside Forte's and the houses at the bottom of the alley were all under about three feet of water. Householders were bailing water out the windows, but it was a losing battle as the deluge continued for a while. At the end of Middle Street was Belray House with an arch next to it. Through the arch was where the local builder Alex Briggs stored his equipment and behind that was an abattoir where Jimmie Edmondson slaughtered the animals for his butchers' shop on the Main Street. Sheep and cattle were regularly driven along West Street and Middle Street from the fields behind Spittal to be dealt with. Next to this was a row of houses called Greenfield Place.

Main Street starting from The Jetty

First house was where Eddy Cromarty lived. He was a local coal merchant who garaged his lorry in the old lifeboat house in Sandstell Road which is now rebuilt as flats. Next lived Eddy Sanderson who was the Fire Chief for Berwick. The Tweed Inn Public House came next followed by the Albion Public House. 18 Main Street was once a Public House called the Fleece; this was followed by it being used as a bank by Barclays Bank. Behind the house were stables which were used to stable horses belonging to Big Jimmie Johnston, a local contractor assisted by Jimmie the Grove. (There were so many Jimmie Johnstons that they were all given a different name!).

Jimmie the Grove was born in the Grove Public House in Tweedmouth. Big Jimmie's son George also drove a horse but when he returned injured from the war he wanted to modernize the business and purchased an Austin Lorry no BJR 57. Later on, George and his wife Margaret increased the business to a fleet of large articulated lorries transporting Jus Rol Frozen Foods to the Continent. The main job of the two Jimmies was transporting re from the Tweedmouth Dock to the Spittal Gas Works where they were weighed and then transported down to Fisons Acid Works in Sandstell Road. The ore was then shoveled into furnaces where it gave off poisonous gases which were then distilled in tall lead lined towers. The resulting liquids were then mixed with other chemicals and used to produce fertilizer. The burnt ores were then transported to Tweedmouth Station where they were then sent to other factories where they were used to help the manufacture of items for the war effort.

Next to 18 Main Street lived Norman Todd who was a barber. A child knelt on a chair and had his hair cut for 4P (old money). There were three passageways between Main Street and Middle Street. The first one was Princes Opens next to the chip shop and further up the street was the Little Opens which was a bit narrower then came the Big Opens along from the Baker's Shop. Kennedy's Chip Shop was next owned by Tom Kennedy. A very talented man who it was reputed to have built his own television set when television was in its infancy. Past the Church was Marion Crombie's Shop. After the annual Kelso trip to Spittal local children used to scour the beach for empty lemonade bottles which they deposited at Marion's Shop and received the princely sum of 2 pence for every bottle.

Next came the Red Lion Public House which was hosted by Mr. Barlow and family for many years. Past Dunrobin Terrace was the little opens. Next to this was a large house owned by the Boston's for many years. Martins the Bakers was next with the bakery up the passage next to

the shop. Further up we come to the Post Office which operated by William Ford and his wife. William Bruce's Butchers Shop came next then the shop run by Nellie Weatherburn who later became Mrs. Pagan when she married Walter Pagan the local coal merchant. This shop sold most items required by local people including newspapers. Over the road to Waterloo Place, we come to Lyall's Grocers Shop which was run for many years by the Lyall Family. Margaret Lyall their daughter became a very popular teacher at Spittal School. This shop was taken over many years later by Mr. David Black who ran it very successfully for many years. Mr. Black spent many hours in the shop until late at night when local people used to call him the 'Midnight Grocer'. Mr. Black's wife was a very popular person in Spittal. She taught piano lessons in her home at the Spa Well and organized concerts and other events in St. Paul's Church Hall. One of her other achievements was running a very successful children's Sunday School at the church.

Further up the street we come to Jimmy Edminson's Butcher's Shop. A lot of the meat in this shop was supplied by his abattoir in Middle Street. Next came Mrs. Barbara Yourston's ladies wear shop which supplied local ladies with many of the items they required. Mrs. Yourston and her husband Andy were accomplished musicians and they supplied much of the music for local socials in the Church halls. She played the piano, and he played the violin. The next shop was very popular with local children as it was Nellie Crisp's Sweet Shop. She always had a large selection of sweets, spades and pails for the beach, ice cream and many other items required by holidaymakers. For a while she also had a shop on the Spittal Promenade supplying the holiday makers with all they required. An ice cream cornet cost two pence.

The Tweedside Industrial Cooperative Store came next. This was the main supplier of provisions for local people. Possibly because at the end of every quarter they received a dividend based on what they had spent in the Coop. The Blenheim Hotel and Public House was next to the Coop and was a very popular place for the locals. Further up the Main Street we pass Lucky Martha's properties which were in the past owned by a very enterprising local lady. The last shop in the Main Street was Mr. and Mrs. Muir's Grocer's Shop. Many of the residents at the top of the Main Street shopped here as it was very convenient for them.

Flodden House beside the Spa Well was where Mrs. ? taught music lessons. The Spa Well which was reputed to have healing properties in the water came next behind the War Memorial. Further up opposite what used to be the Forge Cottages was where the Piercy brothers had their pigeon lofts. They were very successful in many of the long and overseas pigeon races. Thomas Blacks Spade works came next. They were a very successful company who sold their products worldwide. Children could watch the operation of the large hammer through the open door on to Main Street as it hammered the metal into shape.

Spittal School War Information

I can remember when this bomb was dropped on Sunnyside Crescent, Spittal, during the Second World War. I was asleep with my sister in the Morrison Shelter in the front room of our house in West Street, Spittal, when my mother came and shook us awake after the bomb had been dropped in Sunnyside Crescent. We were bundled up and taken across the road to a neighbour's house where we were popped into bed with the two girls who lived there. It was a bit of a squeeze but as young children we considered it an adventure. My mother then left us to go up to where the bomb had been dropped to find my grandfather extricating himself from the rubble of the house which was damaged by the bomb blast. Luckily, he only had superficial cuts and was ok considering that other people had been killed when the bombs had been dropped.

The photograph below shows the bomb damage and the field behind which has now been built upon with the houses of Spittal Hall.

We used to stand in West Street with neighbours at night watching the bombers dropping flares trying to find their targets. One of the main targets was the Chemical Works in Sandstell Road which made sulphuric acid for batteries which were used in army vehicles.

I started school on 9th May 1944 when I was five years of age and can remember going into the school air raid shelter for practices in case we were involved in an air raid. It was very eerie with only candles for lighting. My father was a special constable who spent most nights out on patrol checking people and buildings. One day when he was travelling up the Billendean with his horse and cart when he was machine gunned by a plane. Luckily, he and the pupils going to school at the same time were unhurt.

The photograph of the school pupils below was taken in 1946 and shows a class of pupils who attended the school during part of the war.

The flag was hung out on a clothes pole from the upstart window of our house at the end of the war to commemorate the victory celebrations. We had a street party in Middle Street in the road behind St. Paul's Hall to celebrate the victory. Tables were set out on the road and all the children had a great day.

The shilling coin was presented by the Mayor of Berwick to every pupil of the school.

Shortly after the war finished, we were also presented with a certificate signed by the King.



Mr Anonymous.



Fifty years ago this month, bombs fell on Spittal. There were, unfortunately, fatalities when a bomber dropped its load as it reached the coast and they hit the Farne Road and Sunnyside Crescent areas of Berwick causing extensive damage. The photograph was submitted by Mr Jack Lough of Spittal whose family lived in the house on the left. It was damaged but survived. Spittal had suffered two previous bombing raids before this one.

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Spittal School pupils of 1946 are pictured here in a photograph submitted by Muriel Phillips of Enal Way, Tweedmouth. She has asked that the £10 should be sent to the Tweedmouth Feast Committee. Left to right, back row, John Robertson, Margaret Lee, Elsie Douglas, Maisie Cuthbertson, Muriel Purvis, Gloria Bruce, Rosemary Cowan, Isabel Winter, Edward Johnson. Middle row, Jean Wood, Margaret Moffat, Sheila Blake, Ann Johnson, Margaret Crombie, Veda Glass, Joyce Kennedy, Linda Thompson, Margaret Dunn. Front row, Allan Wood, Robert Mole, Neil Bruce, Johnson Crombie, Tom Bryden, David Stuar.