

Another Good Neighbour

It was interesting to read Phil Munton's item in the recent May edition of the Selsdon Gazette, about his days at Selsdon Primary School. Although we never met we were both living in Selsdon at the same time, so have common memories of those long gone times. It was of particular interest for me to see that one of his best friends at Selsdon School was Simon Noakes. Now that brings back memories!

The Queen's Coronation was in 1952 and was the event at which I first saw a television programme. And I was not the only one!

We had new next door neighbours by then, a young family, the Noakes. Mr Noakes had been an army Captain during the war, out in the Far East, was captured and spent time in a Japanese prisoner of war camp. His souvenir of those dreadful years was a Japanese Samurai type sword. Of more importance locally, was that he became the Captain of Selsdon Cricket Club's Sunday XI. The team's home ground was in Selsdon Rec at the back of our houses.

As a young and affluent couple ahead of the times, the Noakes had a TV set. Being good neighbours they had an open house to watch the Coronation. As you might imagine, it was standing room only to watch this small, flickering screen!

At about this time, young Simon Noakes was born. My Mum became their baby sitter, so on several Saturday evenings when Mr and Mrs N when out socialising, I got the opportunity to accompany my Mum next door and watch the BBC News on TV. How exciting was that!

It was some years before my Dad got our first television. This was after the new ITV channel went on air, and which made television viewing more popular, and hence TV sets more affordable. However they were still expensive to buy, and repair, so most would hire a TV. Ours was hired from Forbes & Co, radio and electrical engineers, with a shop in Addington Rd. It was possibly the popularity of TV hire that caused the demise of Selsdon's other shop, J.H. Radio.

J.H Radio was one of the original shops in Selsdon, before television took off. And as the name implied, it sold and repaired radios, or as they were more commonly known – wireless sets. The shop also doubled up as Selsdon's bicycle shop. In the early 1950s, when new bikes again became available after war time shortages, I remember standing outside and drooling over the must have bike of the time, the Raleigh Lenton Sport.

The location of J.H is shown on the next page, below. It was the last shop at the left hand side of the row. In the 1940/50s Barclay's Bank was only half it's present size, the right hand half. To the left of J.H was an area of waste ground with the Air Raid Warden's Post and fire control water tank. Now this waste ground is more shops.

To the right of the bank (now Selsdon Stationers) was Marsh's – a sweetshop, toy shop and tobacconists. As you might imagine it was the most important shop in Selsdon for us young children, especially at Christmas time. More about this in the future – perhaps for the December 2019 Selsdon Gazette!



But returning to our good next door neighbours, the Noakes.

When they first moved in next door, life was still subject to food rationing. Mrs Noakes came from a farming family and on returning from a visit to the farm she brought us back a lovely rabbit. Not a live one, but one for the cooking pot!

It was harvest time and one of the year's best times for a bit of shooting. I had often seen this in Selsdon Wood. During and after the war, the areas of grass land (for example adjacent to the car park at the Farley Rd entrance) were used for growing wheat or perhaps it was grass for horses, still then commonly used for pulling carts.

At harvest time the system was to start off cutting the wheat or grass on the outside edges of the fields, and continue spiralling in towards the centre. In amongst the crops would be rabbits, which at some time would make a run for it. However, around the ever diminishing area of wheat/grass, were the men with guns, waiting of course for some ration free meat! So the rabbits brought to us by Mrs Noakes, and the rabbit stew that followed, were a most welcome gift from our good, next door neighbour.