

A Personal History By Margaret Churton

'Come with me to Curzon Park'

My parents lived all their married life in the same house in Curzon Park South - no. 17. I came first to Curzon Park in 1927, almost six years later than my parents. It was my home until I married in 1951. Later on I lived in Argyll Avenue for eight years. My mother would sometimes talk of the fields and ponds that had disappeared and I, too, have since seen many changes. Only recently have I taken a closer look at some of the history of the area.

Let us start by going back 160 years to when the tithe map was drawn in 1839. Seven years had passed since Princess Victoria had officially opened the Grosvenor Bridge on 16 October 1832. This must have improved access to this side of the town although tolls would continue to be charged until 1885. Almost all the land just to the west of the new bridge was uninhabited - just fields and one farm. Some six acres of land adjoining the river was owned by the River Dee Company but Brewer's Hall and all the land that would eventually become Curzon Park as we know it, belonged to the Rt. Hon. Lord Howe. If you are confused about the Howes and the Curzons, let me simplify it, Richard Howe was given an earldom in 1788 on retirement as 1st Lord of the Admiralty but he had no sons to inherit the title. His daughter married Assheton Curzon and it was their son who became the 2nd Lord Howe in 1821 even though his surname was really Curzon. The Curzons owned estates at Kedleston in Derbyshire. The Howes were huge landowners, mainly in Buckinghamshire and Leicestershire. Their land in Chester, (which also included part of Saltney - hence Curzon Street must have been just a form of investment, for they never lived there, even though a house in Curzon Park was known as Curzon House for many years.

In 1841 Brewer's Hall was occupied by William Gamon (in his early Sixties) and six young men described as servants (one as young as 17, the others in their early twenties) and not apparently related. Details in the 1841 census are minimal. I can remember Brewer's Hall Farm - and the dogs that frightened me with their barking! I never examined the property too closely but walked past quickly on my way to or from the riverside path round the golf course. Nothing remains of the farm now. There are some buildings on the site - storage buildings belonging to the golf club, as recently as 1967 names appear on the voters' lists - the Sprostons, but they were not farmers. Mr Sproston was the greenkeeper at the golf club. In the year that I was born (1927) Reg Lloyd, farmer and butcher, was living there. I can remember the butcher's shops in the Market and in Bridge Street that traded under the name of Reg Lloyd. I cannot however visualise much land available for farming at Brewer's Hall Farm as I recall it in my childhood. I suspected that it had been lost to the golf course so I asked around to find out when the golf course had been laid out. As it happened, I found an approximate answer for myself. Browns were advertising an auction sale of accommodation land and freehold ground rents to be held on 13th June 1912. In the description I read "The Vendor has recently sold Brewer's Hall Farm for the purpose of a golf course, the laying out of which should materially increase the value of the adjoining property." The accompanying plan, dated June 1912 did not indicate the golf course. Long before the golf course was thought of Brewer's Hall existed though the nature of the buildings may have changed several times over the years. During the Civil War (1643 - 1646) Brewer's Hall was occupied by the Parliamentarians with 'strong guards of horse and foot' who used it as an artillery site to bombard the city across the river.

In 1846 on November 4th the railway line between Chester and Shrewsbury was opened. The route to the North Wales Coast which would also disturb the peace of the neighbourhood opened later, on May 1st 1848. In between these two dates the bridge across the River Dee collapsed (May 1847) under a Shrewsbury train. The Stevenson cast-iron bridge was found to be badly designed but was repaired and re-opened later in 1847. In 1870/71 it was extensively rebuilt in wrought iron and brick.

In 1851 besides Brewer's Hall there were eleven households recorded in the census and two more houses being built. I understand that 'Highfield' is the oldest house in this early development. So what sorts of people were coming to live in this new residential district? Let us look at the occupations of the heads of households. There were two widows of independent means, an agent and accountant aged 55, an inspector of Inland Revenue, aged 58, a brazier, aged 45, employing 13 men (This does not mean that the 13 men were living in Curzon Park), a newspaper editor, aged 46, and a curate of Doddington, aged 39.

Each of these households kept at least one servant. None of the above were still there in 1861. Next my interest was drawn to William Wood, aged 35 in 1851 and 60 in 1861! Something-funny there but his occupation sounded more accurate - ironmaster in 1854 chain and anchor manufacturer employing 147 men in 1861. The census gave no numbers or names to the houses but by accident I have been able to locate the Wood residence. William Wood died on the 29th May 1863 and left his house to his wife Caroline who sold it six years later to Louisa Maria Peers who was a sister to one of my husband's great-great grandmothers. The City Record Office holds the agreement for sale dated 4th August 1869 and also the assignment of the residue of the 99-year lease originally made between William Wood and the Rt. Hon. Richard William Penn Earl Howe in 1851. The plot of land was demised to William Wood on 25th December 1850 described as approximately 2425 sq yds with a dwelling house lately erected. The lease was dated 30th October 1851.

The rent for the first year was a peppercorn if demanded - subsequent years it would be £10. When Mrs Peers came to live there she called her home Everton House - after Everton House near Lymington in Hampshire from where she came. After her death in 1873 the house was renamed Glen Eden which later became Glen Eaton and later still was referred to as just no. 3. Number 1 was Dingle Bank but has long since been replaced by several modern houses and the roadway has acquired the title Dingle Bank. Mr Wood's house is still there though it has no doubt been altered over the years. We can catch a glimpse of it, as it used to be, by reading the list of fixtures and fittings (valued by Messrs Churton and Elphick) for which Mrs Peers paid £133-18sh. The items were listed room by room -drawing room, dining room, breakfast room and entrance hall, kitchen, butler's pantry, back kitchen and larder, four bedrooms (one of these for the servants), a dressing room to one of the bedrooms, bathroom and water closet, a cellar, coach house, stables and saddle room, also yards with poultry pens and dog kennels, the conservatory with hothouse, a cucumber frame, rose garden and fields. The term 'fields' hardly seems to fit with a plot of about half an acre. Part of the garden was left 'wild' perhaps, or perhaps there is a mistake in the description of the acreage. Let's go back into the house. Every room possessed Venetian blinds and all, in varying degree, were lit by gas - the three main rooms downstairs provided with 'handsome gasoliers'. Gas for lighting was introduced into Chester under licence from the Corporation by a company formed in 1817 but the possibility of electric light had to wait a lot longer. The foundation stone of the Electric Light Works in Crane Street was laid on 6th May 1896.

Electricity - something we take for granted most of the time yet something, I suppose, that William Wood could not have imagined as a normal requirement for his home. William Wood was a member of the City Council as well as one of the partners of the

enterprising and eminent firm of Wood Bros, anchor and chain cable manufacturers noted for making the anchors for the Great Eastern, the British steamship built in 1858 from Brunel's designs. The Wood family moved their business from Stourbridge to Saltney in 1847, setting up their works on the Welsh side of Boundary Lane. Besides chains and anchors they made ships' windlass castings, shovels and spades, anvils, vices and nails. They provided work for the people of Saltney and also houses for employees, a school and various leisure and educational facilities.

Between 1851 and 1861 there appears to have been no further housing development apart from the two houses that were being built in 1851. Most of the occupants have changed. Heads of households now include an accountant, a commission agent, an Irish possession merchant (what did he do, I wonder?), a wine merchant, a pharmaceutical chemist and last, but not least William Brown, Silk mercer. If you go to look at the house where the Browns used to live you may wonder how they lived there in 1861 when the gable end is dated 1908. Look at the brickwork for the answer. In later years the extension left too big a building for present-day living and has been changed into two separate dwellings. If you have not already read it, do borrow from the Public Library the book entitled 'Browns and Chester' which tells not only the history of the shop but of the Browns' political involvements, their generosity and concern for the city as a whole, their roles as Mayors, their gift of the Meadows and the beginnings of a public library. In 1861 William Brown was 44 and his wife, Emma, 41. Their son, Harry Faulkner, was 3. I do not remember his death in January 1936 (I was 8) but I do remember his wife and of course their sons. My lasting impression of Mrs Brown was of a very old lady but as I grew up she did not seem to get any older! I think I had some idea of her interest in the Queen's School but I did not know the extent of her generosity as I do now. She was a pupil there between 1890 and 1895, earning the honour of being a Queen's Scholar in 1893 - the outstanding pupil of her day. A grant of £25 awarded to her in 1895 by the governors to enable her to proceed to a degree at London University seems a paltry investment in one who proved herself to be so clever. After graduating with a B. A. in Classics she taught for two years in South Africa at the Girls' Collegiate School Port Elizabeth. Then she returned to London to study for her M.A. In 1902 she married and had a family, but this did not stop her 'careering' on. In 1920 she became the first woman member of the Chester City Council and subsequently the first woman chairman of a council committee, a city JP, alderman and mayor, the first woman in Chester to reach each of these positions and also to receive the Freedom of the City. And she lived in Curzon Park.

The 1871 census is much more useful - the houses are numbered, but one must be on one's guard as numbers are sometimes changed in later years and Curzon Park was particularly odd with its numbering. For many years Curzon Park North which I knew as Deva Crescent and, at one stage was called Curzon Park East, had only even numbers; Curzon Park South, sometimes Park Road or Curzon Park West, had only odd numbers. A stranger would be unaware that two different roads are involved alternately in the 1891 census lists. Apart from the cottages near Brewer's Hall farm and the Lodge which was more a part of Hough Green than Curzon Park, the dwellings were definitely for the well-to-do. Many have just two resident servants but some have five or six which may include a nurse and/or a governess. There are a number of residents 'of independent means' in retirement. Many of the senior members of the households were not born in Chester, coming from considerable distances away. The occupations included a mineral oil manufacturer and merchant, various other merchants dealing in wines and spirits for example, but often not specifying the commodities in which they did business. There were chemical manufacturers, a railway traffic superintendent and a post-office service travelling branch clerk (ten years later he appears as a post-office superintendent). We still find the same accountant (as in 1861) but a different Inland Revenue collector. The law is represented by James Blair, a judge of Liverpool County Court, and an attorney, Henry Taylor, aged 25, whom I shall refer to in greater detail later. And don't forget Mr Brown, the silk mercer.

The total number of dwellings in Curzon Park recorded in the 1881 census had exactly doubled since 1851. Of greater interest to me was the fact that the number in 'my' road (now Curzon Park South) doubled from five to ten between 1871 and 1881 and one of these new houses was where I was to be born. In 1881 Stephen Golder and his wife and their three children were living there. That fact simulated my curiosity! Stephen Golder was born in Flushing, Holland, but was educated at a school in Greenwich where he won the school medal. He was apprenticed to a bookseller in Canterbury and later moved to the metropolis joining a publishing firm, Griffith & Farran. In 1864 he and John Phillipson purchased the bookselling and stationery business in Eastgate Row, Chester, from Hugh Roberts and some 5 years later took in Catherall & Prichard. The business included a printing department. In a large advertisement on the front page of the Chronicle in 1869 I read "Phillipson and Golder beg to announce that at their printing works, 24 Foregate Street, they possess every facility for the execution of all kinds of printing, including sermons and bookwork of every description on pamphlets, reports, catalogues, circulars, cards, mercantile marine forms, receipt and delivery books, cheque books, placards and posting bills of all sizes and in black or coloured inks. Estimates given for any kind of printing letter-press, copperplate and lithographic." All that paperwork! Nothing's new! John Phillipson died three years before Stephen Golder and the firm was carried on by Stephen Golder, James G. Golder (who, I think, may have been a brother) and H.G. Phillipson, who left after a few years to train at Cambridge for ordination.

Stephen Golder was described as a zealous churchman, attending St Thomas's and he also sang with the recently formed voluntary choir at the evening knave service, at the Cathedral. He helped to establish a temperance group which later became the Palatine Club. My grandfather, James Williams, attended Stephen Golder's funeral. Five years later Phillipson and Golder published his book 'The Story of Chester'. Unlike an increasing number of families, the Golders did not live in Curzon Park for very long. By 1891 my future birthplace was occupied by a clerk in Holy Orders aged 33 with his wife, two boarders and two servants. Who was this reverend gentleman, I wondered? A curate at St Mary's, perhaps? I consulted Oxbridge records and was lucky. Charles Lett Feltoe (born in Brixton, Surrey - in today's terms, part of London) was a very clever chap. A scholar at Clare College, Cambridge, he obtained a first class BA degree, later adding an MA, a B.D. and a D.D. to his name. Between 1888 and 1892 he was headmaster at the King's School, Chester.

Now we must go back to 1881 again. Number 17 is semi-detached from number 15. Living next door to Stephen Golder at 15 is George W. Dutton, aged 25, grocer in partnership with his father. George W. Dutton is married with a very young son, but his younger brother, Harry Bolton Dutton also a partner in the grocery business is still living with his parents at number 133 - now the residential home for the elderly (I still think of it as Elsinore). George Dutton was employing 17 men and 131 boys at this time and perhaps, was, at age 51, at the height of his career. He was a member of an old Cheshire family who had been farmers and cheese makers for many generations. He was one of twelve children, the fifth son of Ralph and Martha of Hoofield Hall. After his apprenticeship in Liverpool during the time of the Irish famine (between 1845 and 1847 the potato crops failed for three successive seasons), George returned to Chester to manage George Chivas's shop opposite the Royal Hotel. George Chivas was the second husband of Elizabeth Churton, whose first husband, Richard Weaver, had drowned in the canal when he was only 37. Richard Weaver's business combined grocer, ironmonger, chandler and seedsman and they were also agents for an insurance company. Richard and Elizabeth were grocers but George Chivas came into the firm as a seedsman when he married Elizabeth in 1846 - not long before George Dutton came as manager, presumably on the grocery side of the business.

George Dutton opened his own business in 1854 in Bridge Street. I started collecting details about the Dutton story by using the newspaper, then added my own memories, but discovered questions that I could not answer. I turned up some- advertisements in old copies of the official guide to Chester - unfortunately not dated. I could remember Dutton's 'revolutionary' decision to open a self-service store. This was confirmed by the advert - "Quick and carefree shopping - All you have to do - collect a basket on entry - select your purchases - Pay at the exit. Self Service, the modern method for busy people." But when did this begin? And why did they trade as Dutton's Sigarro Stores?

I was directed by Jacqui Forster (now Halewood) at the City Record Office to an oral history taped interview with Neale Dutton, a great grandson of George Dutton. Here were answers to my questions and a good deal more besides. In 1856 George Dutton moved from Bridge Street to more central premises in Eastgate Street, He issued a leaflet for distribution to advertise the specialities of his grocery business. The shop would be licensed to sell wines and spirits (in 1857 they became agents for Gilbey's). They would sell 'Italian goods (including spaghetti, macaroni, pickles, etc.)'. Special Dutton's tea was blended by James Ashby & Son of London who would first come to Chester to take a sample of the water. This tea was packeted by Dutton's and only sold locally, They carried a wide range of other teas, ranging in price from 3s/8d to 5/- per lb, the most expensive being a gunpowder tea (a fine green tea, each leaf of which is rolled into a pellet). There was a choice of coffee too - Jamaican coffee at 1s/8d per lb, best coffee, 2s/6d. There were different qualities of customers too! Cash prices were allowed on bills paid every 6 months; two and a half per cent discount if paid quarterly. But less-favoured customers were only offered quarterly or monthly accounts. In 1861 George Dutton improved his premises. During excavations for new cellars a Roman altar was found under 13ft of earth and George Dutton used this for his registered trademark, with Sigarro a word devised from abbreviated Latin - Sig (short for signum) ar (short for arae) ro (short for Romani) 'At the sign of the Roman altar'. The stone altar is preserved in the Grosvenor Museum. In 1871 he opened a branch in Wrexham, in 1876 another branch Oswestry. There was also a branch in Saltney but when Neale Dutton was asked when this was opened his memory seemed to falter. I think it was much later, after the 2nd World War. In 1880 George Dutton became a member of the City Council and later served as Sheriff and Mayor. By 1888 he had moved into a much bigger home - Curzon House (much later no. 8 Curzon Park South) where he lived until he died at the age of 73 in July 1903.

But this was not the end of Dutton's Sigarro Stores. George W Dutton was still living at 15 Curzon Park in 1891, but his brother, Harry Boulton Dutton, was now married and living with his wife and five young sons at 26 Curzon Park. It was Harry Boulton who took charge of the business, although other members of the Dutton family were also involved over the coming years. In the days before telephones the well-to-do would arrive by horse and carriage and either come into the shop or the staff would go out to them. The orders would be dispatched by handcart, bicycle etc using trains for deliveries in the country. In 1908 Dutton's were the first in Chester to use a motor powered van, albeit with solid tyres. By 1910 a cafe had been established on the upper floors of the shop premises, whilst downstairs there were all sorts of departments to the shop, including chocolates and sweets, dessert fruits, health foods and hardware, besides the groceries and the wine. Room had to be found also for an office, a cash desk (with overhead railway for collection and returning of any change) and space to weigh out and packet the sugar, rice and other goods that arrived in bulk. They were the first in Chester to purchase a refrigerated counter, enabling them to sell cooked meats, including home-cooked hams, which they boiled in their cellars. I have no doubt that they had to struggle through the second world war like everyone else, without being able to offer what they would have liked, but they soon started bouncing back.

In 1948 their friend, John Wood told them about self-service shops, an idea originating from America, so they converted their bacon department (Which had been in a shop adjacent to the main one) to accommodate a self service store with three staff and one cash till. This was so successful that three years later they sold the small shop and used the capital for more shelving and more tins so that the main shop became self-service. At the same time they continued personal attention, orders and deliveries. In 1954 they celebrated their centenary in March. There was an outing to Llandudno for the staff. The senior staff had a party at the Tudor Cafe (Dutton's) at which Ken Dodd provided classical singing and a humorous turn. Business continued but gradually the pattern of things changed. Grocers had to compete with discount stores and supermarkets - and parking restrictions. The food trade could no longer support a shop with an Eastgate Street frontage and by 1972 the Dutton family (who had long since formed themselves into a limited company) needed a larger return on their capital. So the rest of the story is one of consolidation and contraction.

Jackson's shop in Bridge Street, bought after Mr Jackson's death in 1936 had proved uneconomic by the early 1950s and had been changed from groceries to greetings cards. Dutton's main shop went round the corner into Godstall Lane. Initially they kept the groceries on a much smaller scale and still traded in health foods and wine. The health foods survive and the wine has had a new lease of life as a restaurant and wine-bar. I have moved a long way from 1881 when I first 'met' the Duttons in Curzon Park. I must go back again. I have already mentioned Henry Taylor. In 1871 he was living with his parents and sister at 4 Curzon Park. His occupation was described as 'attorney' as father, also Henry was a 'general merchant'. In October 1878 Henry junior married Agnes Venables daughter of Mary nee Churton.

By the time the census was taken in 1881 Henry and Agnes were already established in their own home at 9 Curzon Park together with two young daughters and three servants. Henry was 35 and described as a solicitor, Town Clerk of Flint and Clerk to the Flint Borough Justices. I have gathered a good deal of information about him in the course of family history research. As I have been paying attention to occupations as listed in the census records, it was amusing to discover that Henry senior had plans for his son to go to St John's College, Cambridge, and then into the Church. Henry junior had other ideas and trained as a solicitor and later practised in the firm of Boydell & Taylor. I also found an entertaining account of how Henry Taylor assisted Dr Edmund Muspratt in setting up the artificial silk industry (forerunner of Courtaulds) at Flint. For both of the above pieces of information I have used old copies of the Chronicle which were written in a very different, and more interesting, style than would be used now.

By 1891 most of Curzon Park's biggest houses had been built. I believe it was intentional that properties would be imperceptibly graded in size between the earlier development and housing nearer Saltney. The first step towards more modest (and less costly) houses came in 1912 when 72 acres of accommodation land and freehold ground rents (amounting to £114-13sh p.a.) in Curzon Park were put up for sale by auction at Brown's saleroom on 13th June. The description, intended to attract purchasers, was of a fast increasing and favourite residential district with excellent train service on Hough Green. This had begun with horse-drawn trams on the 10th of June 1879 and run by electricity from 6th April 1903. Not particularly useful for most of Curzon Park residents I would have thought. The vendor pointed out the advantage of the proposed golf club, as I have already mentioned, and drew attention to the two modern 60ft-wide roads already laid and the considerable care by the owner to keep the property select! Lot 15 was for the ground rent of 17 Curzon Park, my future home, (the house was already built, of course) and it sold for £190, £10 more than the same for no. 15, the other half of the semi-detached houses. Bidding for the main lot was started at £10,000 but was withdrawn at £12,000, so there was no immediate rash of new buildings.

Nothing was achieved before the Great War which left all plans in abeyance for an extra four years, and more. The City Council acquired the whole of the rest of the undeveloped land and was responsible for planning how building plots should be laid out, etc. There were endless discussions as to what proportion of land should be allowed for playing fields and the inevitable references back to the finance committee, etc. There were suggestions that the Council might agree a swap with some land owned by Mr Hunter, the seedsman. In 1921 a scheme had to be abandoned as they would not rank for a particular grant dependent on the land being developed by July 1922. Now I can understand what my mother meant by all the fields that she could remember. She came to live in Curzon Park in 1921 before most of the land had been built on.

Of course the houses did get built in the end. The Saltney end of the estate was developed first. Was this to maintain the class divide from the 'big' houses for as long as possible, I wonder? Elsewhere several houses were built but only in ones and twos. Names first appeared in the electoral register in 1925. These would relate to houses first occupied in 1924. I have used the electoral register as a way of measuring the growth of the new estate, although all the dates will be 'a year late', and there may be minor discrepancies, for example, if a house was not occupied on the qualifying date. In the particulars of 14 Argyll Avenue (where we lived for 8 years) it is stated that the conveyance "between The Mayor Aldermen and Citizens of the City and County of the City of Chester of the one part and Laura Annie Clatworthy of the other part" was dated 15th June 1933. The first entry in the voter's lists is in 1934.

Of the four new houses built west of 27 Curzon Park (Park Road) three appeared in the voter's lists in 1925, all four in 1926. They all had names only, because of the odd numbering system which still existed. Further west again remained undeveloped until after the 2nd World War. They were Hunter's fields but I do not recall that they were cultivated, just fenced off grass, on the south side. Other details from the electoral lists:

Earlsway	1925 - 13 houses, all named, no numbers
	1926 - 315 houses, all named, including St Clare's
	1927 - 40 houses, 2 - 32, 1 - 37 (on the railway side of the road) and 47, 49, 5-31, Broxbourne and St Clare's
	1928 - All the above plus 51
	1931 - Also 43, 45, 63, 65, 67, 71 onwards which would include Broxbourne and 83 (St Clare's)
	1932 - All the odd numbers and most of the evens
Northway	1925 - 10 houses, all named, no numbers
	1926 - 20 houses, all named, no numbers
	1927 - 20 houses, all numbered, some names
Rothesay Rd	1925 - 1 house, Woodvale, later no. -31
	1933 - 1 more house, Crossways, later no.5
	1934 - Also no. 1

Park Rd W 1925 - 5 houses, all named
1926 - 37 houses, all named
1927 - 43 houses, mostly numbered including 2 - 50, 21, 25,
29 - 33 and 41 - 61
1928 - 7 more houses
1935 - 1 more house. A gap remained where several Glan Aber properties
had very long back gardens, not built on until after the 2nd World War.

Carrick Rd 1925 - Fieldway, later no.9
1926 - Also Carrick House, later no. 3
1932 - Also 5 and 7
1933 - Also 11
1936 - Also 13 - 19, 23 and 4 houses with names only
1939 - Also 21, 25, one more with name only, 10 and 24

Greensway 1926 - 8 houses, all named
1927 - 21 houses, all numbered, some named

Selkirk Rd 1926 - 1 house, later no. 5
1927 - Also 19 and 21
1928 - Also 31, 33, 39, and 41
1929 - Also 25, 27, and 29
1930 - Also 11, 13, 17, 23, 35, 37, 43 and 45
1931 - Also 15
1932 - Also 7 and 9, 8 - 16 and 22
1933 - Also 30, 38 and 40
1934 - Also 24, 26, 28, 32, 34 and 36
1939 - Also 1 and 2 (Selkirk Lodge)

Argyll Avenue 1933 - Rothesay House, later no. 6 and Scarcliffe, later no. 12

1934 - Also 4, 10, 14, 16, 19 and 37

1935 - Also 20

1936 - Also Iona

1939 - Also The Cottage and Parkside (but no Iona)

Then came the war and no more building for the time being, leaving scattered open areas around Rothesay Road, Carrick Road and Argyll Avenue. These were the fields I grew up with, together with the western end of the road that is now Curzon Park South, the 'bumpy road' as we called it for obvious reasons in those days. During the war most of the northern side was used for allotments so that we could 'Dig for Victory'. There were stiles to be crossed between the bumpy road and Carrick road. Next to the last of the big houses, The Gables, there was a sports ground belonging to the Browns. There was a rather rough field, not much used as far as I can remember but also tennis courts, which we certainly used, together with a pavilion.

Since the war, every available building plot has been used - first the allotments and the fields, then parts of large gardens. Also large houses have been divided into smaller units. Several cul-de-sacs have been created such as Curzon Close, Westfield Close (created when the house called Westfield was demolished), The Paddock and The Serpentine. Who knows what further changes there may be?

This historical look at Curzon Park has, as you will have noticed, been a personal one. I am reaching the age when it is becoming easier to remember details of my childhood than what happened last week! Some years ago I had a go at writing these memories down - using as a framework Thomas Hood's poem 'I remember, I remember the house where I was born'. Going from room to room in my mind, all sorts of recollections came flooding back, not always completely accurate perhaps but later enhanced by comments from my brother and sisters who have read it.

It became apparent how the war changed the pattern of life. I repeatedly found myself writing before the war this, and during or after the war that. For example, before the war we had a cook and housemaid, both resident, and we certainly had a governess and other childminders, and I know that at least one of these was resident. The governess whom we remember was a certain B. Divino, shortened to Divvy of course. My eldest sister told me that the B stood for Belen and that she was the daughter of the Brazilian diplomat/consul in Liverpool. How had my parents come to employ her, I wonder? School for me and my sisters and several children from the near neighbourhood was held in our dining room. Divvy was a very good teacher (even if we did not like her) and most of us were well ahead of other children of the same age, particularly in Maths and French. I did well in an entrance exam for the Queens School in 1936 when I was nine, well nine before the Autumn Term when I started. One of Divvy's other pupils, Dorothy Hartley, assured me when we re-met some years ago that she had avoided learning anything much at all, however! Dorothy was the younger of two sisters. The Hartley family had come to five at Curzon House (opposite the end of Howe Road) about 1928/9, when I was not yet 2, and I had supposed that they had always lived there.

Although my own home had many excellent facilities for children, Curzon House was in a different category altogether. It was a large house with gracious entertaining rooms, more than one bathroom upstairs and some attic rooms, but the real delights were in the grounds. There were tennis courts, both hard and grass, clock golf and a croquet lawn. There was an orchard with a wide choice of varieties. There were greenhouses

growing grapes, peaches and nectarines, and outhouses and hiding places - oh, and lots of plants and flowers too, of course. Weren't we lucky to know the Hartley?!

Joshua Camm Hartley was 94 when he died on 4th June 1973; I had not seen him since I was a child. Dorothy Hartley had married and has lived in Africa for many years. I remember her father as a gentle kind man, patient with us children. We had a vague idea that his work was involved with bricks but we were not inquisitive so all I know about him at present is what was written in the local paper after he died. He trained as an engineer and then started a chain of brickworks in Wales, which operated for 36 years. He was chairman of the National Federation of Clay Industries at the height of his career (perhaps at the time I knew him) and he was the fifth generation of brickmakers in his family. The newspaper reminded me that he was a keen tennis player, taking part in matches for many years. Mrs Hartley was also a keen player and always served underarm. I think she was also very fluent in French.

Many interesting people have lived in Curzon Park including those who played a substantial part in creating Chester as a shopping city, in today's parlance. I have picked out just a few. I have considered how far the neighbourhood could be seen as self-supporting. To show you what I mean, let me start with Earl Howe, the landowner; then farmers at Brewer's Hall Farm (We need to eat and the name suggests that they brewed there too at some time)- later on Dutton's would supply our food and drink; an architect - what about Freddie Saxton (though he did not specialise in dwelling houses). Mr Hartley could provide the bricks. Henry Taylor might do the legal work (though his legal expertise was in local government, not conveyancing); do you need a doctor? Well, Dr Scott is here (my father's doctor, though not my mother's), a dentist? - John Davey; a chemist to make up the prescriptions, Mr Hopley of Cheers and Hopley in Northgate Street (The Hopleys lived next door to my parents at no 15); a parson - Mr Feltoe might do, or more recently there have been clergymen at 17 Carrick Road and a Methodist minister in Selkirk Road, a teacher - B.T. Williarns in Selkirk Road or Mrs Evans in Earlsway who taught our children when they first went to school or others you may know. the army was represented at the top by brigadiers (Mascall and Harding) and at the bottom(?) the A. T. S. billeted in several houses during the 2nd W.W, Brassey's, the ironmongers, Shuttleworth's for leather goods and so on. Just a bit of fun, of course, as I have mixed up all the generations. And I should not have left out Phillipson and Colder's for without books and printing much history would be lost and my pleasures be the poorer. That brings me back to myself as I too have lived in Curzon Park. Although I did manage a third class degree in science many years ago, it must be as a wife and mother that I have mainly achieved. That is surely another occupation that should be included in a 'self-supporting' community.