

Like most mothers, when she had got over her anger at the damage to the house, she was relieved that I had come to no harm.

The main shopping area was along Ladypool Road, which had a large green grocers shop called Westwoods, a butchers, a bakery, an ice cream shop, sweet shops, cleaners, shoe shops, etc, and best of all the Olympia Cinema. One of my favourite treats, if I had two pence, was to go to a bakery and buy a big slice of bread pudding. Two pence also bought a bag of scratchings at the fish and chip shop. Scratchings were pieces that had broken off from the batter on the fish when it had been fried. Once I had learnt to read, it was easy for my mother to keep me quiet by giving me a book, which kept me interested until I had finished it. Because we did not have money to buy books, mother would get them from the Public Library, which was about two miles away on Moseley Road. As soon as it was possible. I obtained a library ticket and was happy to walk to the library to borrow books. Most of my early borrowings were fiction including Dr. Doolittle, Robinson Crusoe, Treasure Island and the Biggles series of books. Biggles was a particular favourite of mine, because he was an adventurer who flew aeroplanes, which excited my interest.

My time at Clifton Road did not provide many memories for me, but I remember that each morning we lined up in twos before entering school. Climbing up the stairs, we saw the headmaster standing on the first floor landing holding his cane behind his back, thus ensuring our silence. There were some memorable teachers including Mrs. Phillips who played the piano at the school morning assembly and Miss Barlow. In Miss Barlow's class we sometimes sat on the floor, while she sat on a chair at the front of the class. To this day, I can still remember the striped knee length knickers that she wore.



Clifton Road football team in 1946-47. The teacher is Mr. Bennett and Graham is second from the left on the back row.

Several times I did play truant from the school by sitting on a shop front in Ladypool Road and then sneaking back home after mother had gone to work. The trick was to be out of the house before mother returned. But that came to an abrupt stop one day, when mother came home early. After that I settled down and began to take an interest in the subjects being taught. This was reflected in my passing the 11 Plus exam allowing me to go to Grammar School instead of the local Secondary Modern School. Billy did not pass the 11 Plus and went to the Secondary Modern School. Therefore, although there were only 18 months between us, we were destined to be separated throughout the remainder of our education.