



Chaddesden Historical Group

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“Along the Front” The Shops at Chaddesden Lane End. by John Bennett

Early in 2022 the sign “Chaddesden Post Office” was revealed (photo below) when the last occupants of the premises moved out and their signage was removed. This got me thinking about the shops as I remembered them in my youth in the mid-1960s.



“Along the front” was the phrase we all used to describe going to any of the shops on the north-east side of Nottingham Road; those on the other side of the road (south-west) were known as “over the road”. In the 1960s the scene was quite different from today. Along the front there was a footpath by the main road and one directly in front of the shops, in between was an area of gravel, grit and puddles, overseen by a very large tree. Cars and other vehicles bounced and splashed across this to gain access. Today it is surfaced and marked out with parking spaces.

There were no traffic lights at the junction and no light controlled pedestrian crossing as there is today, just a traditional “zebra crossing” with Belisha Beacons to warn drivers of its presence. In the 1960s no one would have dared to park on the wide pavement “over the road” as they do today, forcing their way out into the stream of traffic when the lights change.

Beginning at the corner opposite the Park Hotel the first shop was the Co-op, a large grocery store and a separate butcher’s shop, a typical Co-op layout seen all over the town. One night, returning home late from a school disco I noticed a small van parked in front of this shop, next day we learned that burglars had stolen all the cigarettes. Next were two houses with front gardens stretching down towards the main road, a feature we found most annoying as you had to walk around them to get further “along the front”. Then came Boots, the chemist, and then the bread shop where my mother worked for a few hours in the afternoon. It was run by Mrs Fowler, assisted mainly by Mrs Page and one of my errands was to fetch their fish and chips from across the road on Saturday lunchtime. All the shops closed for lunch. The bread shop was owned by Mr Nicholson and supplied by Pearts who eventually took it over.

A little further along was Thrupps, greengrocers and florists, managed by Mr Poole, father of my brother’s pal, assisted by Doreen, who appeared to work mainly to finance holidays abroad at a time when very few of us would ever dream of such a thing. The garden at the back of the shop had huge rhododendron bushes which were great for making dens. Mrs Poole made the most delicious potato cakes and could feed four or five “pals” from one large potato!



Along the Front continued

There was the Meadow Dairy with the wonderful smells of cheese and bacon, to be cut and sliced to order. Here you handed over the list mother had given you, along with your shopping bag and the assistant fetched everything and handed the full bag back to you over the counter. A phalanx of ladies did all of this, including adding up the cost “in their heads” whilst engaging in an animated commentary on every aspect of life “along the front” with other customers and each other!

At about this point was the footpath through to Ravenscroft Drive after which came “the Little Dairy”. This shop was “a cut above the others” and we only ventured inside if we could not obtain our needs elsewhere as it was quite expensive.

Towards the end of the row was a ladies dress shop, Modes, presided over (I think) by an immaculately dressed couple, husband and wife we presumed. Most of the men we saw worked at British Celanese or at the railway sidings and dressed accordingly, but here was a man at work in a pale suit, with a smart white shirt and tasteful tie, highly polished shoes and beautifully cut hair, trim moustache etc, an appearance only attempted by our fathers when attending a wedding!

The very last shop was a sweet shop, with a very high counter, behind which were the rows of glass jars with good quality toffees and other delights, mostly beyond the reach of our pocket money. Our cheap “rot your teeth faster” chews came from the newsagents.

Beyond this, behind a high hedge on the roadside, was Crawford’s Garage, run by Jack Crawford, who I recall as very helpful man, who would go out of his way to assist his customers. He was always patient with little boys sent by their fathers and who asked too many questions. We always thought he was a former soldier but then so were most of the men of his generation.

Finally there was a modern detached property which stood back from the road, with a shop on the ground floor and living accommodation above. This was presided over by the inimitable Mrs Murfin, whose family, probably her sons, ran a haulage and coal delivery business around the back, with some superbly maintained dark green Foden lorries. Mrs Murfin’s grocery shop was always open, early in the morning, late into the evenings, on Sundays, Bank Holidays at a time when this was against the law, but such things did not seem to concern her. We boys wondered if she ever slept or ate meals because she was always there, keeping a close eye on you. She did not suffer fools gladly and expected you to know what you wanted, pay for it and go! There did not seem to be anything she did not stock and she was often the “saviour” of a good housewife who had run out of something and invariably would not admit this to the husband!

This is an abridged version of an article on our web site which may be found from the History page <https://www.chaddesdenhistorygroup.co.uk/history> by searching for *Along the Front*.

Are you interested in Shops and Shopping?

The Chaddesden Historical Group has a database of shops in Chaddesden which is currently held as an Excel spreadsheet. It is a substantial research work with 196 records, each record containing the name of a shop, its address, the nature of the business and the approximate first and last years of trading. We also have several handwritten lists of shops on Nottingham Road that need to be compared with, and added to the database, if they are missing.

Despite its size, the database is incomplete. Sussex Circus, the Wyvern Retail Park and Oakwood District Centre are all missing although all within the former Chaddesden parish. Also, the database is many years out of date. Neither Aldi nor Lidl on Nottingham Road, nor the new Marks and Spencer at the Wyvern is mentioned.

For a member who would like to record this aspect of Chaddesden's history, this could be an interesting and challenging project. If you are interested and think that you could add to this record of our history, please contact any committee member or Peter Barnes.

A Short Guide to the Parish Church of St. Mary The Virgin, Chaddesden

This booklet by Peter Cholerton, which was first published in 1976, has been revised and updated with the addition of colour photographs. The 2022 revision may be found and downloaded from the [History page](#) of our web site by searching for *St Mary*.