

Well I Never

The picture was taken looking east along Max Road (Sussex Circus is behind the camera) in 1938 or 1939. The row of houses with prominent chimneys on the left is Marjorie Road. The hipped roofs of the houses at the top of Renfrew Street can be seen on the right.



This event in Chaddesden's history could well have stayed hidden from the people of Chaddesden for all time had it not been for the actions of one man who found it impossible to live within the laws of decent society.

The story came to light during a report in the Derby Evening Telegraph of 30 July 1986 which concerned the trial and sentencing of J J Graham of 1** Max Road, Chaddesden who had been found guilty of two robberies of a Derby bookmaker named Arthur Whittaker. Graham pleaded guilty at Nottingham Crown Court of robbing Whittaker in July 1985 and robbing him again in February 1986. Graham also pleaded guilty to conspiring to rob the National Westminster Bank in Duffield in January 1986, all of these crimes involved the use of firearms. Graham and his co-accused were all sentenced to lengthy periods in prison.

An indication that there was more to this story came with the revelation that there was an extensive armed police cordon round the Court during the trial as well as enhanced security within the building. The Derby Evening Telegraph revealed all in a series of articles during July and August 1986 when they reported that Graham was in fact an Ulster terrorist and super grass on the run from Northern Ireland and living initially in a police house in Buxton Road and then in a house on Max Road purchased and staffed by heavily armed Special Branch officers. When Graham was arrested in connection with the robberies, several guns, 79 bullets and a box of cartridges for a pistol were all found buried under the garden shed.

John Graham was, of course, not his real name. In Northern Ireland he was a commander in the Ulster Volunteer Force and was implicated in the murder of Miss Maureen McCann, who was stabbed to death during a raid by terrorists on her quiet Post Office on 5 May 1982. When arrested he decided to turn super grass and thus became an RUC informer. He was offered immunity from prosecution and, with the approval of the Director of Public Prosecutions, he turned Queen's Evidence against his former UVF colleagues. Within days a number of men were arrested and charged. His success as an informer was short lived however and his trial evidence was subsequently discredited. Those accused vowed revenge. Several years prior to these events 'Graham' was convicted and sentenced for various terrorist activities, spending 6 years in prison.

Now a marked man by his former colleagues 'Graham' had to flee NI with a new identity and for reasons not known Chaddesden was chosen as his new home. The Derbyshire Police had very little input in these affairs and even the Chief Constable at the time, Mr Alf Parrish, was unable to comment; a spokesman told the DET that he was unavailable for comment and believed to be away on holiday!

The reports of the time featured many guarded comments from local residents as well as several full pages dedicated to the fact that Graham had entered into a relationship with a lady from Little Eaton and that they lived happily together at the house in Max Road. She appears to have been caught up in a set of circumstances which were totally out of her control but she did however vow to stand by him and wanted to marry him as soon as possible.

This article gives the briefest outline of events concerning Chaddesden's link to world events and goes to show that not all of our local history is of a savoury nature. For anyone wishing to research the whole sorry, and extensive, tale of Chaddesden's safe house and its occupants it can be found in the copies of the DET on the following dates; 29, 30, 31 July 86 and 9 Aug 86; also in the Derby Trader of 6 Aug 86. Our archives also hold these reports which include many details not mentioned here. AJB.

