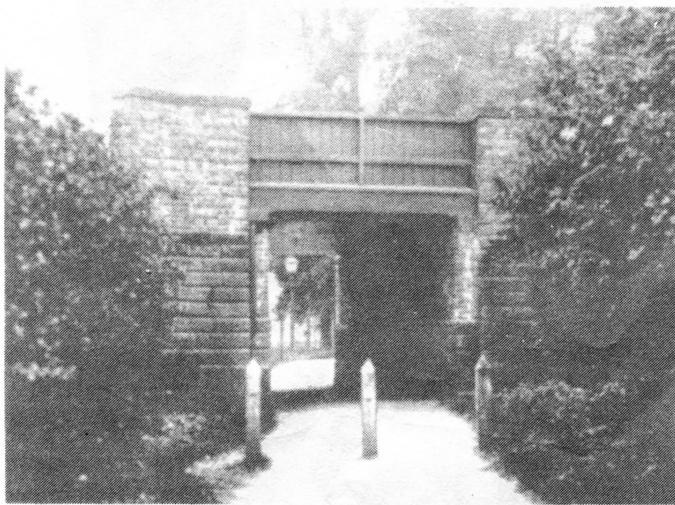


THE STORY OF ALBANY ROAD

Although the suburb of Earlsdon had been in existence since 1852, it wasn't until 45 years later that there was any direct link between it and the City. Admittedly there was the 'Jetty'- a narrow little lane which ran from the Butts to Earlsdon for foot travellers which had been in existence since time immemorial but wheeled traffic all had to take a roundabout route either across Styvechale Common to the Warwick Road or across Hearsall Common to the Spon Street area.

The Jetty was a well used pathway for the local farmers and market gardeners making their way to and from the City and for the many residents escaping from the close City confines to enjoy the fresh, clean air of the open fields and commons for which Earlsdon was justly famous. There were myriads of wild flowers to be found there too, among the bracken, harebells, erica, wood betony, tormental and wild thyme as Joseph Gutteridge discovered in the 1820's.



Above: Top bridge looking down from Earlsdon
Below: Earlsdon in 1889 showing the Jetty (top centre, pointing North East)

Of course, after families began to settle on the new estate in the 1850s and 60s, the Jetty took on a greater importance, while at the same time, it became less and less attractive. A ditch which ran alongside carrying the surface rainwater from the streets and the waste water from the growing number of homes, made conditions very unpleasant, particularly from the smell, and the City Fathers received many complaints about the 'Earlsdon Nuisance'!

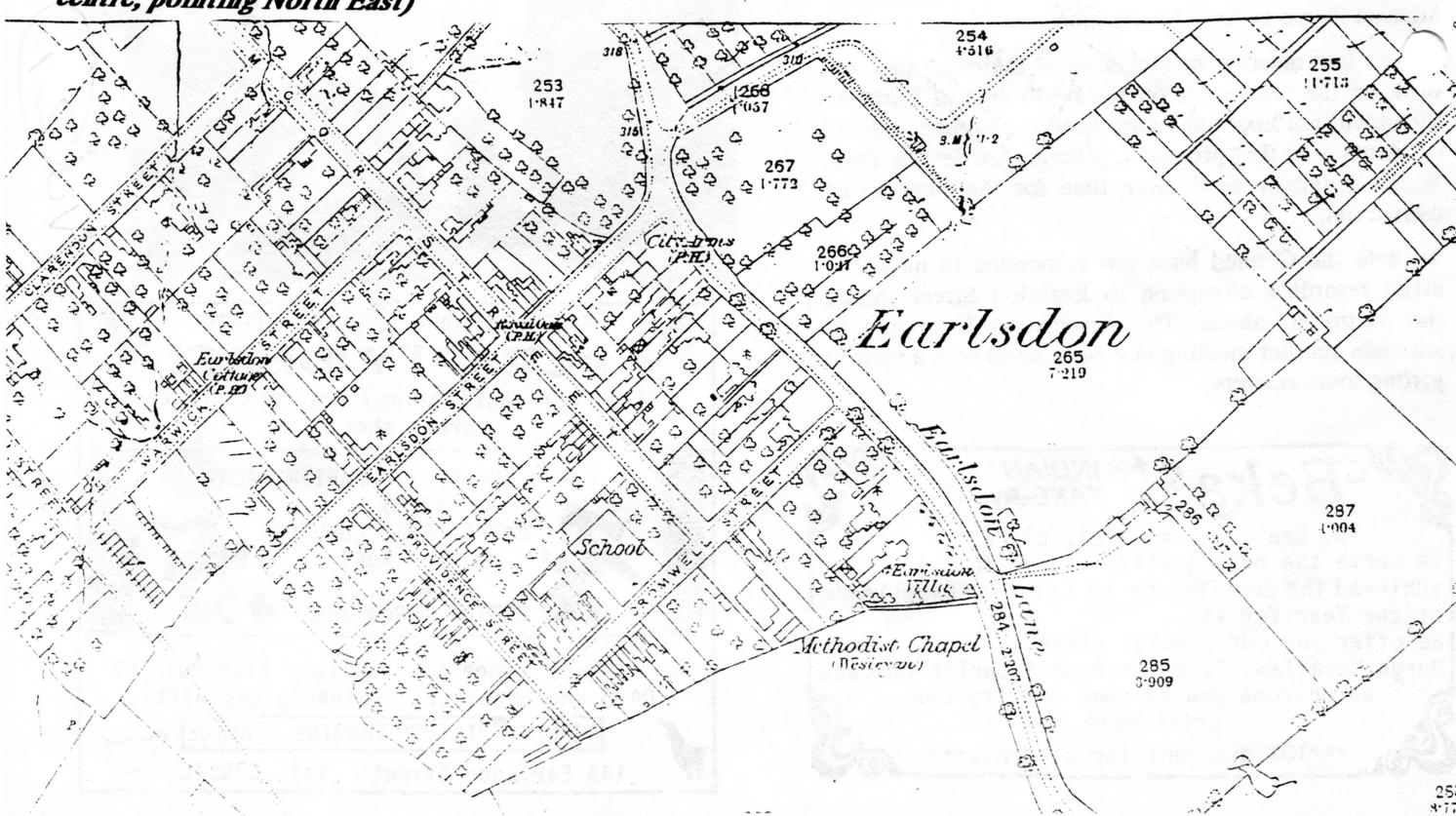
However change was on the way.....

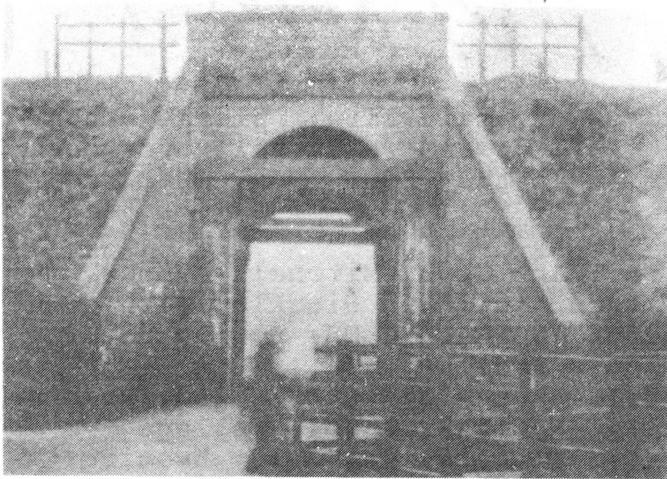
Much against the will of a number of local Earlsdonians who, not unnaturally didn't like the idea of paying City rates, it was at last agreed in 1890 to incorporate the suburb. Overall the advantages were great, not least the provision of a proper direct road route between the two areas, plans for which were immediately drawn up.

In December 1891, according to the minutes of the General Works Committee, the Town Clerk was instructed to write to the owners of property on the route of the proposed new road asking what terms they would accept to give up the required land to the Corporation and they would contribute to the cost of the road when and as their properties were disposed of or laid out for building. Most of the land belonged to the City Freemen anyway, but it took a lot of argument, during which negotiations broke down completely for some considerable time, before agreement was finally reached in October, 1897.

Can you imagine the frustration of our local folk as year after year passed by without any sign of the proposed new road ever becoming a reality.

At last tenders for the work to be carried out were asked for and six received, ranging from £ 9,489.2s.5d down to £ 5,728.8s.0d. After the ability and financial position of Mr Herbert Holloway had been investigated, his terms (of course, the cheapest) were accepted and work was at last begun.





Bottom bridge looking down towards the Butts

The route of the road was to follow that of the Jetty, apart from the section stretching from the top bridge up to Earlsdon. This was to be slightly diverted to align it more closely with Earlsdon Street to form a neat cross road with Earlsdon Lane - now Earlsdon Avenue North and South. The two rail bridges were found to be too low to take the height of the expected traffic and so, as they can't be raised, the road level itself had to be lowered giving the effect of the road running through a deeper valley than was really the case.

Towards the end of 1898, the road was more or less complete and already in use and plans were made for its official opening. The duchess of Albany had been to St. Thomas's Church in November to open a bazaar there and the Mayor thought it would be a good idea to commemorate the visit by naming the new thoroughfare not Earlsdon Road as had been originally intended, but Albany Road. The Duchess, on being approached, 'graciously gave her consent' and the Mayor, at the small ceremony, declared the new road 'Open.'

Today, you can still walk down the top section of the old Jetty from between the school and the library to the bottom of Newcombe Road but any resemblance to the Jetty of 91 years ago has long since disappeared.

As soon as the road was finished the builders got busy and houses began to appear almost immediately, both on the road itself and on the new streets which sprang up along its route, until by the mid 1920s the whole area had been built up.

The trams were the first form of public transport to use the road. What a boon that was - both for the residents and for the growing number of City folk who began to take increasing advantage of the excellent Earlsdon shops.

After 50 years of comparative isolation and what had become virtual stagnation, the opening up of Albany Road gave the little estate a new lease of life and an impetus which made it one of the most popular suburbs of the City.

The above article was contributed by local historian Mary Montes who also kindly lent the photographs.

Photo by: BKS Photo

VAL & JOHN

Mothers Day~March 10

Bouquets of flowers
Bunches of cut flowers
Pot plants Greetings cards

BROOMFIELD ROAD POST OFFICE

LAKE VIEW UPDATE

The Friends of Lakeview Park are moving closer to their dream of creating a 5-acre wildlife lake and nature reserve on the land off Four Pounds Avenue in Chapelfields.

Their plans have received the backing of the National Rivers Authority and the City Council whose Leisure Services Department has helped them to draw up a proposal for a feasibility study. Four companies have been asked to give a quotation to do the study and their replies are currently being assessed.

Further discussions are taking place with Leisure Services on moving dumped refuse, more tree planting and how the area should be mowed during the coming season. The Friends are also applying to the Property Services Department for a lease on some adjacent abandoned allotments to create a nature reserve of two to three acres.

Dave Cole, the group's Secretary, told ECHO that there is already a very large range of wildlife on the land, particularly birds. As well as the common blackbirds and song thrushes, members have seen blue tits, great tits, wrens, greenfinches, goldfinches, bullfinches, dunnocks and black-headed gulls in winter. Also, fourteen species of butterflies have been seen in and around the area including the rarer Holly Blue and Small Heath. Members will be doing a census for the British Butterfly Conservation Society this season.

The Friends of Lakeview Park have over a hundred members and a subscription of £1 a year. For more details of their plans and activities contact Dave Cole on Coventry 595580.

HEARSALL SCHOOL REUNION

This month sees the fourth annual Hearsall School Reunion for pupils and teachers. It takes place at the City Arms in Earlsdon Street on 15th March starting at 7pm.

As in previous years it is expected that most of the pupils will be those that left from 1966 to 1968 and the organisers will be particularly keen to see more old boys, as the seem to have been a bit reluctant in the past! Nevertheless, people have come from great distances in past years - as far away as Wales - and thirty to forty attended last year's event at Hearsall School.

The organisers are Linda Alton (nee Oughton) on Coventry 396497 and Diane Clarke (nee Perks) on Coventry 460766. Please get in touch if you are interested.

JOHN TAYLOR



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