

Since moving to Clissold Court eight years ago I have picked up snippets of information about life in the Court since it was built. I have felt for some time that it would be good to record this 'oral history'. I started my research with Mrs Little who has lived in the Court since it was built. I hope to continue with the help of people who have lived in the Court for a long period.

Annette Percy

THE HISTORY OF CLISSOLD COURT, 1935-1945

Mrs Little's first memory of the area to the north of Clissold Park goes back long before the flats were built. When she was a little girl she came with her father to buy plants from Stroud's nursery which was on the site. As she grew up, she had a friend in Forest Road, Dalston, called Bubbles. Bubbles had a car and used to explore the neighbourhood. One day she reported that flats were being built to the North of Clissold Park and she and Mrs Little and another friend went to the Estate Agents to see the plans. Both Bubbles and her mother and Mrs Little and her husband George came to live in the flats in 1935. The building work had not been completed and there was sand in the bath. The foreman builder was a man called Luckett who was a Canadian baseball player and he had made his base at No. 24.

The property was built by Hickmans, the shop fitters, and it was administered by the Clissold Property Company. The Estate Office was a small wooden building at the entrance to the estate outside Flat No. 1. Mrs Little still has her second three year lease, dated 1938, and mentioning a yearly rent of £95.

Mrs Little told me about the other people who lived in our block. Bubbles and her mother moved out and a lady called Mabel Bird moved into No. 25. Her husband was editor of The News of the World, but he died soon after the war. The lady at No. 22 was Norman Hartnell's secretary. The man at No. 23 worked for the Water Board.

Just before the war the Hackenbrocks came to live at No. 2. They were refugees from Berlin and Mr Hackenbrock set up his dental practice. He was interned on the Isle of Man along with other Germans but residents George Little, Laurie Price and Tony Helston stood surety for him so that he could return home to the Court. The residents got to know each other well as the war progressed and they spent nights sheltering under the stairs. One night they heard a bomb drop nearby and then noticed that the halls were being invaded by beetles. On investigation it turned out that a bomb had dropped in Manor Road fracturing a water main. There was a lake of water up to the front doors and it remained there for about three days. Mabel Bird, was an air raid warden. When a bomb dropped in the park and became hooked on a tree, she was sent to guard it. Mrs Little remembers her standing near the tree in her tin hat, with a cigarette in her hand, not knowing what to do.

Other residents were Harry S. Pepper who was very well known on the radio, and the Weston Brothers. Anne Ziegler and Webster Booth were married from Harry S. Pepper's flat, which is where the Palmers live now.

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