

# Linzee Reminiscences



*“At sixty three Linzee Road N8 lives little Kenny Stevens.  
Now we are as happy as can be, at Linzee Road number sixty three.”*

A rubbish little song but at least it indicated that Mum wasn't too displeased at my arrival at the end of the war, when she was 44! The title illustration is of an old postcard postmarked 1912, somewhat before my time. I like to think that the inked cross at the far end showed that the sender, Bernard, lived at number 63, though of course it could have been any house along that end. We rented the ground floor, whilst upstairs was let to another family of the same surname though wholly unrelated – until my brother married their daughter, a variant on 'marrying the girl next door'. We had a front room, a middle room, a scullery and a back room, all linked by a long corridor. We also had use of the bath upstairs for our weekly soak. The four of us fitted in somehow, though as I got older, Dad gave me my own room, i.e. the wood and glass lean-to tacked onto the garden (*the right-hand picture below*). Unfortunately the budget didn't run to putting any flooring over the concrete patio and my little hovel was freezing in winter and boiling in summer. There was a brief moment at each equinox when conditions were tolerable.



Earliest memory is of being childminded by Mrs Loveday down the road. Then I went to Campsbourne nursery school before moving in due course a few yards along to the infants school. It was chalk and slate before we progressed onto pencil and paper. For a while, sweets were still on ration so I learned how to take my coupons and pennies to Staddons round the corner in Priory Road for my sherbert lemons.



My best friend was Trevor Myers down the road (No.15 or 17?) and not just because his Mum made wonderful egg & chips for tea and they had a television. Apart from the sheer technological miracle of TV, I was fascinated by the fact that a picture of our local Alexandra Palace mast was shown before the news programme. Why, of all the places in the world they could have shown, did they select that one? The penny dropped when I was older. I was very sad when the family emigrated to Australia. We got our own television in time for the Coronation and there was also a street party. Living in a cul de sac and with only two cars in our end of the road, there was plenty of room for everyone to bring out their tables and chairs.



Childhood street games included conkers, fivestones, marbles, “What’s the time Mister Wolf” and “It”. Marbles might be played something like miniature bowls or else a more complex snookery sort of game around the ridges and hollows of a manhole cover. As we grew older then cricket and football took over, played in both cases with an old tennis ball. Our cricket wicket was the gas lamp post outside number 63, which was unfortunate for Mr & Mrs Haider at 68 as their windows were in direct line of our massive swipes. Fortunately we only used tennis balls, so the glass remained intact. Sometimes the ball would disappear down the drain and we would try to fish it out with bent wire, ever fearful that we might catch scarlet fever or some other rumoured plague in the process. That gas lamp had a projecting bar for the lamplighter’s ladder and was fun to swing from. Local exploration included the wilderness behind Linzee and Clovelly Roads. I joined the Cubs for a while, at the Moravian church hall, and later on the Scouts and have vague memories of “dib dib dib, dob dob dob” and playing British Bulldog and Hopping Red Rover.

Certain words bewildered us little kids:

- Why did the manhole cover upon which we played marbles say that it was made in Hornsea? Did they not know how to spell our borough’s name? (My indignation was revived recently on seeing a small ad for Hornsey pottery, instead of Hornsea, so my geography is improving).
- When climbing the slide in Priory Park, what was the meaning of the words “Wicksteed Kettering” cast into the steps? (Many years later, when living near Bedford, we took the kids to Wicksteed Park in Kettering, named after the manufacturer of playground equipment, who was a local benefactor)

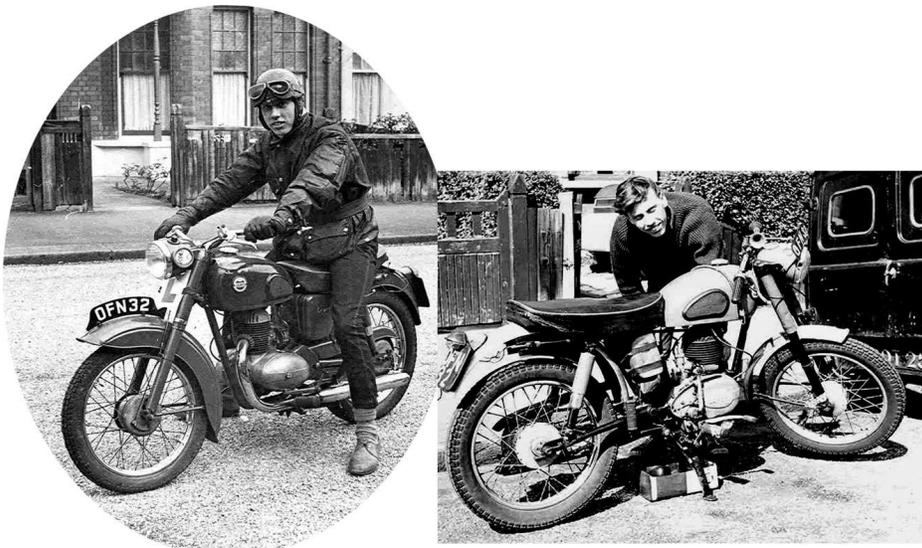
Another mystical wordplay arose from periodic visits by the rag & bone man (or “recycling operative” as I suppose he’d be called nowadays) as he trundled round on his horse & cart; his request for scrap iron and other castoffs such as furniture came out something like “En/yol/dine/nlumber!”. On the other hand some words were accepted for what they were. “Linzee” Road was so called because that is where it was, though I have since learned that it was after The Rev Edward Linzee, son-in-law of Mr Warner and buried in Hornsey churchyard. “Moravian” church similarly failed to arouse curiosity as to its origin, as did the “Old Road” at Alexandra Palace, since revealed as having been the previous access to the grounds.

It wasn’t just the fog of childish incomprehension; there were also proper fogs – dense, nasty, acrid ones, with conductors having to walk along Priory Road in front of their buses to guide them. In those days, roadworks had elderly nightwatchmen huddled in canvas shelters to guard the tools & materials and our gang enjoyed sharing the glowing coke brazier on the works site encamped at the end of Linzee Road when Priory Road was being resurfaced. Dad bought a load of the tarred wooden blocks that had enclosed the tram tracks before the war and I much enjoyed playing with these giant bricks in the garden before they all got burnt on the open fire in the front room.

It needed Mum to take me round to nursery and infant school but I could take myself off junior school. I wasn’t always terribly punctual and many’s the time I shinned over the cul de sac fence to the back alley of Beechwood Avenue as a shortcut to Campsbourne school. Sometimes I was ejected back over again by an irate Beechwood Avenue resident and had to slog all the way down Linzee Road and reverse course down the even longer Nightingale Lane. One morning, Mum woke me in a panic because she’d overslept and it was terribly late. I rushed off and my heart was in my mouth as I got my first glimpse of the empty playground that meant that the assembly bell had long since been rung. However I arrived to find that the gates were locked and there wasn’t a soul around, so I went back home. Thus did I first become aware that clocks change in springtime.

Milk was delivered by the Co-op horse & cart. Mr Young at No. 66 would come out with bucket and shovel, hoping to get manure for his roses, usually to be told that the horse had “been” a couple of streets ago. When paying the milk bill, you had to quote your Co-op dividend number, so if 63 Linzee Road still has 990366 written on the brickwork by the front door, that’s why. In due course, an Express Dairy electric milk float took over. A summer treat was a threepenny orange drink in the 1/3<sup>rd</sup> pint bottles similar to those used for that ghastly school milk we had to drink each day that always warm and a bit “off”. Later on we clamoured for a wonderful new frozen orange drink in a triangular waxed paper carton. There was nothing quite like a Lubbly Jubbly on a hot day.

My first motorbike was a James Captain with a 200cc Villiers engine, pictured here in original trim (No.68 in the background) and in modified form (front gates of 61 and 63 behind).



I started work in 1962 and commuting entailed waiting at the bus stop by the Priory Road shops for whichever came first – the 217 or 231 to Turnpike Lane or 233 for Finsbury Park – and then onto the Tube up to town. Dad had died, brother was married and I was about to be, so in 1969 Mum moved down to live with an old friend at Herne Bay and we took over the ground floor of 63 Linzee from her. Much redecoration was required to get it how we wanted and tasks had a habit of escalating somewhat. The front room had been the lounge (not that we called it anything but 'the front room') and the garden room a bedroom but we swapped them round. By the way, redecoration included covering up the mural painted on the wall facing the bottom of the stairs. So if the present owner has stripped that wall for repapering thereby revealing the hidden masterpiece, it was my Dad wot done the flamingo, not Michaelangelo. Chipping out a small crack in the lounge plaster for filling resulted in swathes of it falling off, having been loosened by a WW2 bomb blast in Baden Road. A touch of luxury was introduced by constructing a canopy between the back door and the outside toilet, so as not to get soaked in bad weather. It was still there when I visited briefly a few years later for an old neighbour's funeral. We stayed on until 1973, when I transferred to a post in Cheltenham, thus ending 28 years of my life in 63 Linzee Road, Hornsey, N8.



*Ken Stevens*

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