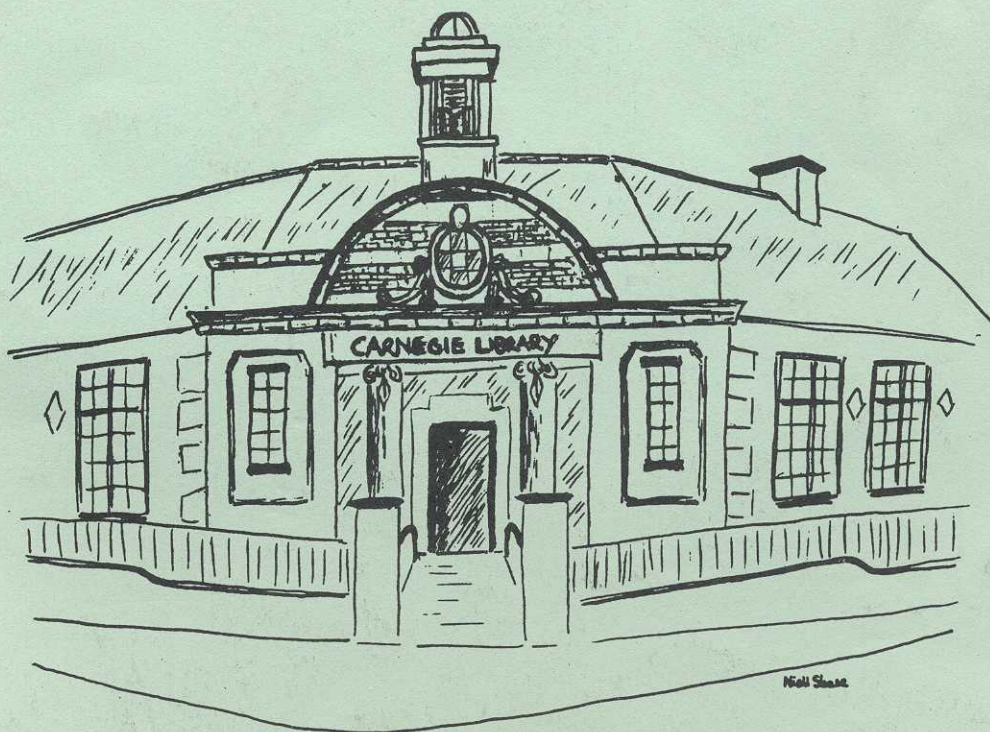


Langley & Langley Green Recalled



Langley & Langley Green Recalled

**Compiled & edited by
Suzie Drew & Diane Callow**

in co-operation with
the Langley Local History Society

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Community
LIBRARIES**

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Langley Local History Society wish to acknowledge the commitment of Suzie Drew and Diane Callow in compiling this book. Without their time and effort it would not have been possible. The Editorial Committee would particularly like to thank Suzie for her patience in putting up with our somewhat long winded deliberations. Also special thanks to Peter Sloane for help with the layout and desk top publishing.
J.A Durrant - Chairman

Aim

This book does not pretend to be a complete history of Langley. It is purely a taste of the memories and memorabilia gathered on our Reminiscence Day and throughout this centenary year of the Langley library service. It is hoped that it may awaken further memories in its readers, to be incorporated in a much fuller history, encompassing a wider area including Causeway Green and Rood End.

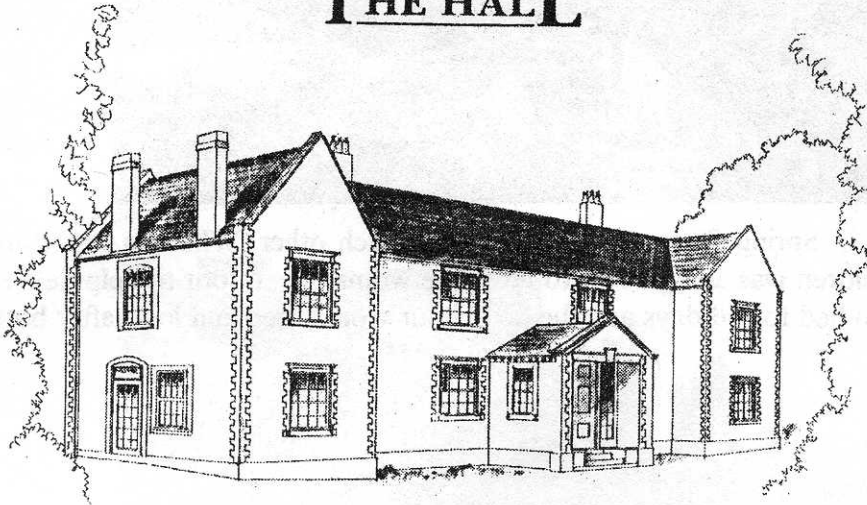
CHANGING TIMES

Langley may be described as an urban village on the south-eastern fringe of the Black Country. It was entirely rural early in the 19th century and farms remained well into the 20th. In every direction Langley is surrounded by towns and villages which have spread to embrace one another, boundaries usually ill-defined or a temporary convenience. Travellers who look down on Langley from the M5 do not know they

are passing through... Postal progress has altered the correct address from Langley Worcs. through Langley Birmingham to Oldbury Worcs. and now Oldbury Warley West Midlands. No wonder it is difficult to convey to a stranger where Langley is or know where it ends.

from St. Michael & All Angels' Langley - a parish profile by Rev. Christopher M. Beaver 1990

THE HALL



A most imposing Grade II listed Hall, originally dating from the Medieval Period and now beautifully restored to provide six individual architect designed flats, together with a small exclusive development of thoughtfully planned flats and houses.

by



**WILLIAM
JACKSON**
(LANGLEY GREEN) LTD.

Langley Hall

Langley Hall is thought to have been built c. 1812, but may be older. In 1855 Mr Bloxcidge sold the hall to James Sadler. Langley Hall Farm was adjacent to the hall, and there was an uninterrupted view of the Rowley Hills. The Hall was converted into 2 residences in

the late 1800's, & reconverted to one house around 1902 by Dr. Sharp. The last known occupant of the hall was Dr. Stevens. The Hall was derelict until 1991, when it was renovated & converted into flats by the local firm of William Jackson Ltd.

Illustration from the sales particulars. Reference Smethwick & Roundabout. J.Ellery Jephcott 1952

Whyley Street

I started work in the family firm of William Jackson (Langley Green) Ltd at the age of 14. I worked as a bricklayer and was then in charge of the sites, as I didn't want to go into office work. I lived in Station Road, opposite Albright & Wilson's Club and then moved with my parents to 21 Whyley Street, just over the road from the off-licence. My father used to like racing pigeons and I used to take them up to the Pigeon Flying Club at the Hen & Chickens for him.

He also enjoyed a drink at the Crosswells, accompanied by his bull terrier bitch Betty, but he often came home without her, having forgotten she was with him. It was my job, most nights to go and fetch her, as she wouldn't move for anyone else.

When I was first married we lived in digs in a one up, one down back to back house almost at the bottom of Whyley Street.

Tom Jackson

*Whyley Street showing
Spring Street on the right 1970*

Spring Street

I remember my father building an Anderson shelter in our back garden at the beginning of the war. It had electric lights and everything, but every morning it was flooded. We eventually discovered that Dad had built it over the spring, from which Spring Street takes its name.



There was a lovely atmosphere in Spring Street. Everyone helped each other. When an expectant mother went into labour, one of the children was always sent to fetch the woman next door to help deliver the baby. The new mother would stay in bed for 14 days and the neighbour would feed and look after both families.

Mabel Dockett (née Smith)

Pawnbrokers

My great grandfather was Mr Benjamin Bird. He had a pawn shop and was a well known character in Langley. He owned four houses in Station Road and property in Trinity Street. About halfway down there was an entry with at least half a dozen back to back houses, which they used to call "the big yard". In those days a lot of people pawned things regularly to get money and the saying was that they were "just going to Uncle Ben's" (pawnbrokers were always called "Uncle" in those days). My mother told me that Uncle Ben's Bridge was named after my great granddad, although there have been other explanations.

Ada Kelly

My great aunt used to take clothes to the pawn shop regularly on Mondays. I remember her telling me that she used to wet them before she took them, because it would make them weigh heavier and they were loaned by weight.

Evelyn Asby

Local Characters

I remember as a child Johnny Gould, the fishmonger, who had a shop in Trinity Street and came round with a pushcart selling fish. He was a small man with a glass eye and always wore a bowler hat.

Doris Pierce

Johnny Gould always had a big dog with him. Sometimes, for fun, he would bend down and get the dog to jump over his back.

Eric Fanthom

The salt woman used to come round the houses selling large bricks of salt and someone used to come round selling watercress for Sunday tea in a woven basket on wheels.

Doris Pierce

In the mid 1940s there was a man with one leg, who sold bootlaces and buttons outside the Institute every Saturday. Polly Wooliscroft used to bring the milk round in big churns and she used to cuss blind. "Icecream Tony" was an Italian, who lived in Rood End. He used to come around with a horse and trap and sell icecream by the jugful.

Arthur Barratt

Facilities

My Gran lived in Broad Street in a 3 up 2 down house with a bluebrick yard and a brewhouse across the yard, where we washed. The toilet was a wooden bench with a round hole in it. Beyond the toilets was a grassed area with several communal washing lines for the 6 or 7 houses round the yard.

Jean Atkins

The Oldbury Street Plan published by G.W.May (undated but presumed 1950s) advertises "the modern Public Baths in Vicarage Road", where "washing slipper baths for both sexes are open all the year round" and "laundering facilities are also available to the public by means of modern electric washing machines."

My mother Edna Lewis (née Griffiths) was always very proud of the fact that they were the first family in Langley to have a flush toilet. Apparently all her friends from school came round to see it, when it was installed.

Isabelle Shepherd



Langley Green - backs of houses before demolition in the re-development area 1970

Inventions

I was about eight (1920s) when this strange contraption of twin wires was slung from the house next door, down the yard, and fixed to a pole at the bottom. There was a short pole at each end and keeping the wires apart - it was much too high for a clothes line. The lad from the house on the other side of ours was as puzzled as I was, but it was all solved when the lady of the house invited us in, and there on the table was a box, and what we later knew as earphones were handed to us, we took one each and heard our first broadcast music - it must have made the good lady happy to see the look on our faces. In a very short time, however, that kind of wireless, as it was called, was outdated by the "loud-speaker."

Bill Hipkiss

The Edward Street Primitive Methodist Chapel Grand Bazaar Programme of April 1903 contains an advert from A.H. Matthews, High St., Langley for "a good fountain pen" which "is a most indispensable article in these times, affording relief, as it does, from the annoyance of dipping, it is a great convenience to all who write, being a pen-holder and ink-well combined." The "commercial" version, fitted with a 14-kt gold pen was for sale at 3s 6d (17½p).

At the same event, the Refreshment Stall was offering tea or coffee for 1d (½p) per cup, ginger beer for 1d per bottle, sandwiches for 2d (1p) and beef or ham for 6d (3p) per plate.

A Child in Langley

When we were children we were told that, if the eternal flame at Albright & Wilson's ever went out, Langley would blow up. I remember as a child of 10 coming over Uncle Ben's Bridge on my 3 wheeler bike and seeing that it had gone out. I ran into the house screaming. The eternal flame went out 3 or 4 times actually, but we're still here to tell the tale.

It was said that, in the war years, they put a huge gun on top of Blue Billy, but it was only used once. As it went off it buried itself and the blast blew out every window in Langley.

Mabel Dockett (née Smith)

Holy Trinity School, which was nearly opposite the church, was used as a Sunday School in the mid 30s. I remember walking along there as a lad and picking up white, glassy rocks. They fascinated me, because they smelled strange and they glowed when you rubbed them together. It wasn't until I worked at Albright & Wilson's years later, that I discovered I had been playing with pieces of phosrock.

Gordon Higginbotham

During the war 3 or 4 of us lads were playing cricket in the middle of Cross Street, when a policeman came round the corner and gave us a right telling off for playing in the street. Then he took the bat off us and showed us how to bat and bowl properly, before telling us that if he caught us playing in the street again we'd be in big trouble.

Dave Arnold

I attended Titford Road Primary School from 1939 to 1942, then St. Michaels Senior School until 1945. Therefore most of my education was during World War II. We had many disruptions due to air raids during the early years of the war. I remember sweet rationing - but before that, at the start of the war, sweets were in short supply. Lambs, the off-licence and sweet shop in High Street, had one consignment per month and, when that occurred, news went round fast. Everyone flocked to be in with a chance of some sweets or chocolate - they would be sold out in about an hour!

Pat Rodwell

I was a bit of a lad when I was young. I remember getting caught by the police on top of Langley Regent (Cinema) and being given a clip round the ear and warned never to do it again. Another time I was playing about on the railway bridge, hanging from the top by my hands. Halfway across I got scared and couldn't move. Mum was fetched from the top of the road. They got a horse and cart positioned underneath me and spread the hay out on it to soften my fall. I got a right thrapping for it afterwards.

Eric Price

When the weather was hot a gang of us lads would go swimming in the cut. There's many a good swimmer who learned to swim that way in those days (1920s). Of course, playing along the canal banks was another great favourite as a pastime. There were lots of barges to wave to and climb aboard then.

Bill Howen

When we were little, one of the games we played was skipping. We used to tie the rope to a gas lamp, so that only one of us had to turn it. When we were older we went to Titford Pool to the concerts.

Mrs Lowe

Nowadays children from local schools enjoy karate, swimming, going to Oldbury Rep & Oldbury Leisure Centre, the cubs, the library and the park. Some enjoy walking along the canal and others playing football round the back of the flats.

Roxanne Watson, winner of the recent Childrens Local History Quiz, summed it all up for us, when she said "What I like best about Langley is that it is such a friendly place."

SHOPS



The Five Ways Langley from the High Street, looking towards Albright & Wilson's showing the Co-Op 1970. The five ways were High Street, Broad Street, Trinity Street, Station Road & Whyley Street.

Arden Grove runs parallel with High Street and cattle used to be driven down the Grove to be slaughtered at Wincotts the butchers. It was quite common for a cow to run up the entry on to the party yard.

Kathleen Hammond (née Redding)

Mr Hands had an assistant called Eli Biggs. Us children used to taunt Eli through the huge shop window. The shop was always very busy and Eli got very annoyed when we chanted:

"Eli Biggs,
He kept pigs,
They all had curly tails!"

Eli would then pick up a chopper and chase us off with it. I bumped into Eli on the bus years later and I was still scared to death of him.

Mabel Dockett (née Smith)

**Celebrated Home-made Sausages
and Pork Pies.**

ALFRED HANDS,

(12 years with E. Hedges, Birmingham)

— Pork Butcher,

23, High St., Langley; Langley Road, Langley Green;
and 105, Oldbury Road, West Smethwick.

★ ★ ★

Wholesale Dealer in Hams, Bacon, and Lard (Mill and Farm fed)

UNRIVALLED SAUSAGES AND PORK PIES DAILY.



F. A. BILLINGTON
(LANGLEY) LTD.
Dispensing and Photographic Chemist
Sight Testing and Dispensing Optician

Developing and Printing, Films, Cameras, and
all Photographic Sundries

Toilets, Cosmetics, Baby Needs, Surgical and
Medical Requirements

**17, LANGLEY ROAD,
LANGLEY GREEN,
(BRO 1810)**
and at
**259, HIGH STREET
SMETHWICK
(SME 0244)**

*Advert from Edward Street
Primitive Methodist Chapel Grand
Bazaar Programme 1903*

Mr Higginbotham remembers queueing at Hands's for sausage well before 7 o'clock on a Saturday morning during the war rationing years.

*The first branch of Billington's
Chemists, as advertised in the
Langley Churchman of December
1958*

Photo courtesy of Carol Eyres (née Penn)



Youngs Stores (left) was previously owned by my father, when it was called Evans Corn & Seed Stores. The shop was in Langley Road and had a lot of land with it, on which the post office was later built. We sold corn and seed on one side and grocery on the other. We were there until 1947. My friends used to call me one of the posh kids, because we had our own private toilet, even though it was in the next street (in Henry Street - round the back).

Ada Kelly

MODERNISE YOUR HOME

- * PAINTS
- * WALLPAPERS
- * TILED GRATES

C. PENN

23 LANGLEY RD.,
LANGLEY, Birmingham
Phone BRO. 1319

Let me introduce you to—
THE SHOWROOM FOR GRATES



My grandfather Mr Edward Strode owned the original shop, which was then taken over by my father Mr Carmi Penn. We lived next door to the shop, which some people might also remember selling fishing tackle in the early 60s.

Carol Eyres (née Penn)

Photo courtesy of Carol Eyres

Advert from Langley Parish Yearbook 1952

I remember Strode's, the local paint and wallpaper shop also selling crockery, hardware, a bit of ironmongery and, in season, a few Christmas cards and novelties. Mr Strode himself was a top-class painter and decorator, and customers could be sure of personal service and good advice (not to mention a good "cant" and a sit-down!) from someone who knew what he was talking about. *Emily Tranter*

SHERWOOD'S

Confectionery . Tobacco . Ice Cream

BILLIARD HALL

43 Langley Road, Langley Green

Adverts for Sherwood's shops from the Langley Parish Year Book 1952

Sherwood's for sweets, chocs, ices and cigarettes. Who has not paused to gaze longingly into its windows or popped in for some little indulgence on route to the cinema or

coming from work? Behind the shop was opened a kind of club room where local lads could enjoy a variety of indoor games such as snooker and billiards. In those days of large families and shoe-string budgets, this fulfilled a great need.

Emily Tranter

A few yards on and here we are - Sherwood's again! This time for fish and chips. . They had their fair share of awkward customers. A certain one might bring back his portion of fish and say it wasn't worth the 'tuppence' he'd been charged. Without a word the fish would be taken back and the 2d refunded. 'Keep smiling - Your turn next' described the outlook of shopkeeper aswell as customer. Years before, in my childhood days, this shop was in the capable hands of a Mrs Edwards. Then the fryer had to be heated by a fire of small coal and many's the time I've seen her stoking up that fire.

Emily Tranter



EAT AND ENJOY

SHERWOOD'S

HIGH CLASS FISH & CHIPS

Also BEST QUALITY WET FISH DAILY



Note the address—

53 LANGLEY ROAD, LANGLEY GREEN

The Shop where EVERY Customer is treated with Respect and Courtesy

Langley Road in 1974 showing Sherwoods shop before demolition . Photograph by John Round

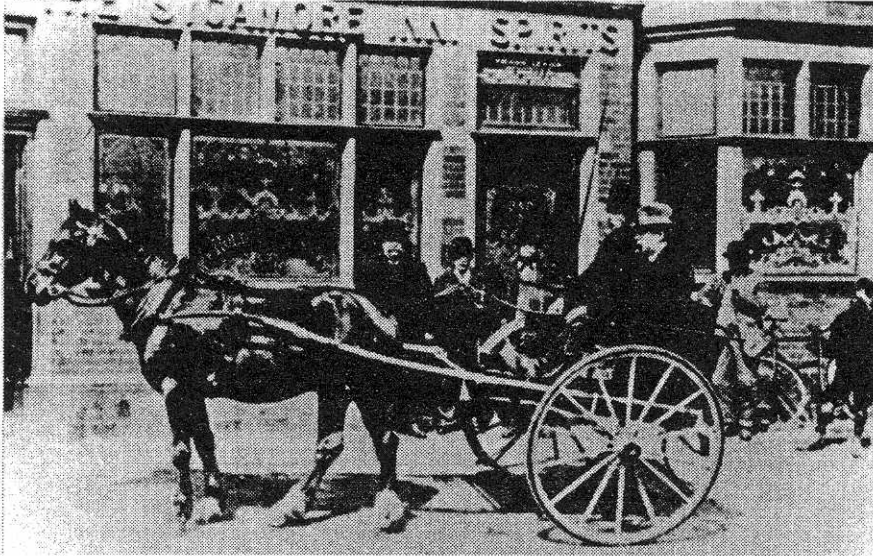
TRANSPORT

It is incredible to think now how little traffic there was in the 1920s, hardly any motor-vehicles - an infrequent bus service, a very occasional lumbering, big lorry, and perhaps the odd car - and usually with solid tyres on roads just in their rough metalled state. Which, no doubt, was the best surface for horses, especially in the winter; and of course there were plenty of horses. All the tradesmen used them, and the undertakers with their magnificent black Belgian animals. Up Titford Road a little way, on the far corner with Broad Street, was a stable for four sturdy cart-horses belonging to the Cockbill family, and they worked from Albright & Wilson's. You could set your clock by those horses being led down to start work, back and forth at midday, and back in the evening; in between they carried residue from the works to the tip towards the top of Titford Road, behind the allotments.

Even though there was not much vehicular traffic, I recall a policeman on point-duty on the Five Ways; neither Trinity Street nor Broad Street were one-way streets then, and so I suppose it was necessary with vehicles turning into and out of Trinity Street - especially the buses.

Bill Hipkiss

Horses



This is a photograph of my grandfather Mr Joseph Cockbill in his trap outside the Sycamore Inn in Clay Lane (now the bail hostel). He owned haulage opposite the school in Titford Road with shire horses and carts. They also sold dairy products from the house in Titford Road until 1935. He died in 1931 aged 72.

Charles Cockbill

Canals

Barges at the back of Langley Forge - early 1900s

In the winter the canal often froze over, and I remember the ice-breaker boat coming along with the men rocking the barge back and forth to cut thro' the ice. They always had a fire in a brazier on the boat deck.

Pat Rodwell



Railway

The local station started as Langley Green & Rood End, then it changed its name to Oldbury & Langley Green and it is now called Langley Green.

The first station master Mark Tatton (seen on the right) joined the G.W.R. in 1876 at the age of 14. He retired in 1924 after over 40 years service at Langley Green. His motto was "Civility, courtesy & obliging". He was also a member of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes.

Information & photo of Langley Green & Rood End Station courtesy of K.W.Crump (grandson of Mark Tatton)



WORK

You cannot go anywhere in the world without finding products made in Oldbury. Oldbury is a small town with only 53,000 population. It has no imposing civic buildings, no big shopping centre, and much of it, to be honest, is rather dirty. But it's honest dirt - the dirt that comes from hard work, not from slovenliness. For when it comes to industry, this small town of Oldbury can hold its own with any other town or city in the world... Back in 1769 Oldbury looked very different, a collection of scattered villages and farms adding up to less than 1,000 people.

from Made in Oldbury Souvenir Handbook of the exhibition of local industrial effort held at Langley Baths in 1949

Farming



Harvesting taking place before 1924 at the junction of what is now Farm Road and Pound Road - picture courtesy of Mrs Elliott

I was two when we left Langley and by moving to Causeway Green we were moving into the country.

Emily Tranter

We ran the Model Pub from 1972 until 1989. When we moved in you could still see the fixture, where the bar had been divided into two. The one half had, in earlier times, been specially reserved for the local farmers and was known as "the duckpen."

Albright & Wilson's car park in Station Road used to be farmland in the early 40s and it was occupied by a horse called Pongo, who regularly used to jump the fence, race down Underhill Street and chase the children in Langley Park.

Arthur & Lilian Barratt

Industry

According to the Made in Oldbury Souvenir Handbook, in 1769 there were already forges working, making nails and similar small items, which were light enough to be carried out along the poor muddy roads. The cutting of the first canal through Oldbury in 1769 provided a cheap method of transporting heavy goods - "The iron and coal were there, so was the clay for the bricks. Coal mines, blast furnaces and brickyards were founded - industries which relied on cheap transport and which could never have flourished in the days when the horse wagon was the only method of moving goods from place to place."

Langley Forge

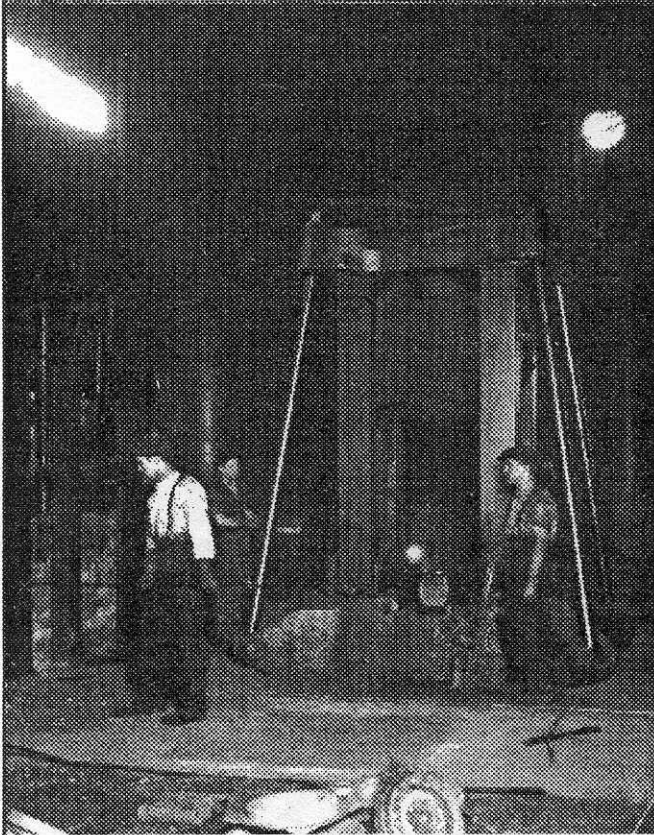
The Langley Forge Co. Ltd has specialised in the production of steel forgings up to 25 tons each, for over 50 years...the manipulation being carried out by steam hammers or by heavy hydraulic forging presses...(producing) turbine rotors for power station equipment, crankshafts for pumping stations and mining gear, die blocks for the drop forging industry and sugar mill rollers that go to India and Brazil.

from Oldbury Official Handbook c.1947

The steel ingots used to make ships cranks at Langley Forge used to be fetched on a bogey and steam traction engine from the station. I was told that once, when the engine was travelling over it, Uncle Ben's Bridge collapsed and that was why they had to build a new bridge in the late 30s.

Gordon Higginbotham

Hughes Johnson



The firm was started in 1877 by James Hughes and Richard Johnson. Already having a reputation for high class work in agricultural machinery, bicycles and cars, the company was naturally called on to produce forgings for early aircraft, and drop forgings made at Langley were airborne in 1910. A subsidiary company, Light Metal Forgings, Ltd., was formed to operate a forge devoted exclusively to light alloys. The production was so varied that from the same forge came ice-cream servers in bronze and the aluminium propellers which won the Schneider Trophy finally for Great Britain.

Information taken from Made in Oldbury Souvenir Handbook 1949

Photo of Hughes Johnson stamping hammer courtesy of Doris Pierce

I started work for Hughes Johnson in Mill Lane at the age of 14 (in the late 1920s) as teamaker. I used to catch the tram to Vincent Street, Bordesley to fetch special tea for the management and I had to make up the coal fires in the offices. Everyone started work at the bottom and worked their way up in those days - I finished up on a lathe making tools for the workers.

Three men worked on "the Becky" in the 4 ton shop - the driver, the stamper and the furnaceman. When the factory started stamping titanium and nimonic metal for jets it was much harder to stamp and much louder. There were a lot of complaints about the noise from the new homes in the area.

Eric Stevens (known as Vimto or Flap)

Ham, Baker & Co

Established in 1893, the business of Ham, Baker & Co. Ltd., General Engineers and Iron and Brass Founders, Municipal Engineering Works, Langley Green, is well known in Government, municipal and industrial departments which deal with sewerage and sewage disposal, water supply and waterworks, irrigation works, waterways, electrical generating stations, oil fuel depots and oil supplies. During the war the majority of new aerodromes at home and throughout the Empire received their piped water supplies and were protected from fire through valves and fittings made at Langley Green. Up and down the country bomb-damaged equipment in municipal and industrial fields of activity was quickly restored to working order with the help of valves, penstocks, flap valves, etc., from the same source.

For the present, the firm is busily engaged, among other activities, in producing penstocks and sluice valves for electricity generating stations in various parts of the country, valves in abundance for coal-to-oil conversion, and large quantities of fittings (made at their Langley Works) to be shipped regularly from British ports to destinations throughout the British Empire and Mandated Territories.

from Oldbury Official Handbook c. 1947

Albright & Wilson

Arthur Albright first made phosphorus on a commercial scale in Birmingham in 1844. The substance was then little more than a chemical curiosity, difficult and dangerous to handle not only because of its inflammability, but on account of its serious effects on the bones and teeth of the workers. Albright soon turned his attention to the safer amorphous or red phosphorus, and his pioneer work on its commercial production gave the world its first safety match.

In the early 1850s Albright went into partnership with John Edward Wilson, and the first phosphorus works of Albright & Wilson was established at Trinity Street, Oldbury. For almost a century the firm has been growing on this site until today an area of some 41 acres is covered with plants making a wide range of chemicals. The present Chairman, Mr Kenneth H. Wilson, a former Mayor of Oldbury, and the Managing Director, Mr. W.B. Albright are grandsons of the original founders of the firm.

Although phosphorus itself has important uses, chiefly in match-making and the metal industry, it is as the starting material for a large number of chemical compounds that it occupies such an important position in the chemical industry of today. The manufacture of phosphoric acids and the phosphates derived from them has increased rapidly during the past thirty years, and in this development Albright & Wilson have played a leading part.

from Made in Oldbury Souvenir Handbook 1949



*Nappies aired yet,
Mrs. Hollis?*

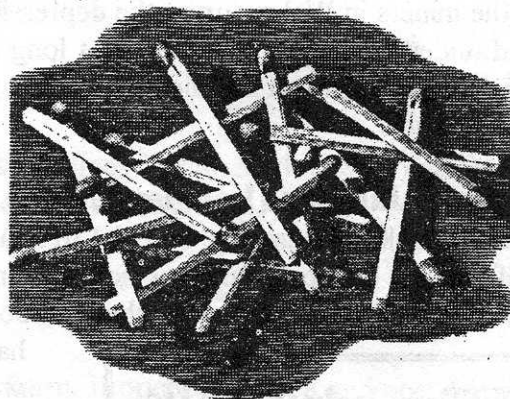
When washed in water soft as rain, clothes are really clean and free from hard-water lime deposits. In laundries, Albright & Wilson's 'CALGUN' (Sodium Metaphosphate) has long been used to soften hard water. 'CALGUN' is not a soap, nor a detergent, but simply a water softening powder. It is now being distributed through retail shops for all home uses.

A sample of Calgun will be sent on request

ALBRIGHT & WILSON

Chemicals for Industry  ALBRIGHT & WILSON LTD
25 PARE LANE LONDON W.1

from the Langley Churchman May 1956



LIGHTING EVERY MATCH

A hundred years ago Arthur Albright's idea for making *Amorphous Phosphorus* on a commercial scale brought safety to workers in match factories, and gave the world its first safety match. Today Albright & Wilson's match phosphorus products light every match made in Britain and countless millions of others all over the world.

ALBRIGHT & WILSON
CHEMICALS LTD



AMORPHOUS PHOSPHORUS - PHOSPHORUS SESQUISULPHIDE

from the Langley Parish Year Book 1952

Parkes Classic Confectionery



Shortage of materials means that the variety of sweets produced is still nothing like the 230 lines made pre-war, but Parkes - preparing for the complete derationing of sweets next month - have already proved that post-war austerity, even if it means shortage, need not mean any departure from high quality standards.

Founded in 1904 by Mr Parkes, himself a Langley man, the firm has always concentrated on quality. Mr Parkes is today chairman and managing director, and his traditions are carried on by Mr J. Statham, works manager.

from Made in Oldbury Souvenir Handbook 1949

Arthur Parkes started as a barrowman, pushing his barrow round Langley Green. He turned to the wholesale business after the first World War. My father Joseph Statham was one of his first employees and joined him as a carter, taking the goods wholesale to the shops. Mr Parkes thought he could make the sweets cheaper, so he employed a Frenchman to make the sweets, who taught my father. The factory was gradually built in the gardens of two adjoining houses in Crosswells Road. The company sold cheap sweets to the miners in Wales during the depression under the name of Diamond, but the best sweets were always sold under the name of Parkes. Not long after the company was merged with Bluebird Toffees my father retired. It finally went into liquidation and the building is now occupied by the Hot Shots Snooker Club.

Colin Statham

William Jackson (Langley Green) Ltd

William Jackson (Langley Green) Ltd is a firm of building contractors which will shortly be completing a half-century of work during which building contracts of every description have been carried out, among the most important being churches, schools, hospitals, cinemas, public buildings, factories and housing. It

has also executed a considerable amount of concrete foundation work, which is so necessary for local heavy industry.

Recently it played a considerable part in the manufacture of prefabricated units for the Government's temporary housing scheme, and has a fully developed joinery department capable of manufacturing all types of specialised fittings, both in hardwoods and softwoods.

Text & advert from Oldbury Official Handbook c. 1947

William Jackson (Langley Green) **Ltd.**
BUILDING CONTRACTORS

JOINERY MANUFACTURERS
 SHOP AND OFFICE FITTERS
 REINFORCED CONCRETE
 CONSTRUCTORS

CONTRACTORS TO ADMIRALTY, WAR OFFICE AND
 MINISTRY OF WORKS

LANGLEY GREEN .. Birmingham
Established 1897 Telephone: BROdwell 1345 (2 lines)

William Jackson was a major building firm and the Jackson family were very influential and much respected in the local community.

When the brothers Tom and Harry Jackson retired they were the last members of the Jackson family to work in the firm, which finally ceased trading in 1994.

SCHOOLS

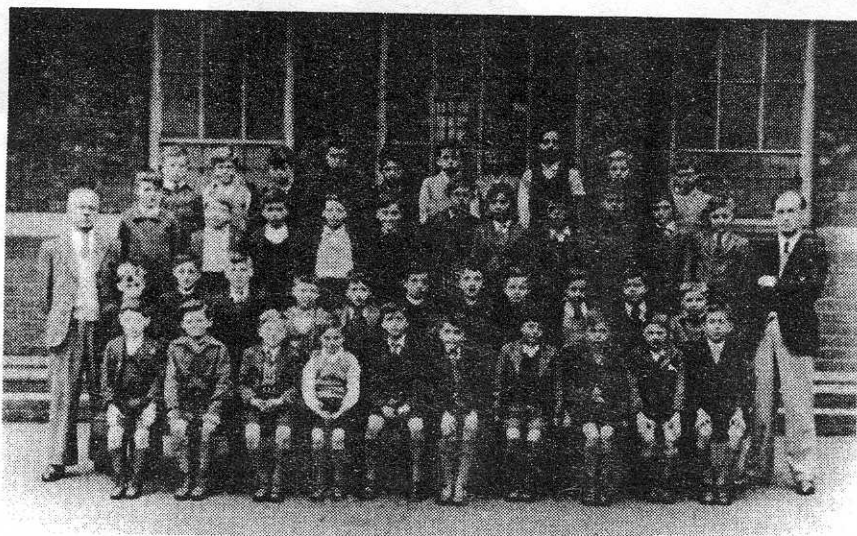
Titford Road School - now Langley Primary School

Most of us started when we were about three years old, I certainly did in the early 20s. I don't know when the school was built, perhaps towards the end of the last century, but there was only gas lighting. Every afternoon in the winter time Mr Pool, the caretaker, would make his rounds with his magic stick and light us up. There was central heating I know for a fact, because every winter we had an extra holiday, the system had frozen up, or burst, or both. Who cared?

We were made to salute our teachers when we passed them in the street, and discipline inside the school was pretty tight, corporal punishment was the norm of course, in fact there was at least one teacher who used to lose his rag to such an extent that it stopped barely short of being capital. That was when I was in the "big boys' school", and where Mr Robbins, the headmaster came round each morning to collect money for savings, milk, and sports; the milk was for any boy staying "dinner", there was no dinner, no dinner ladies, not even any sandwiches - but it must be said that hardly any child needed to stay in the two

hours break we had at midday, everyone lived in the close vicinity of the school; and the sports money, that is a sore point to this day - it was only a half-penny, per day if I recall correctly, but it was rotten for the boys who had to stay put whilst others were paraded up to Langley Park for sports.

Bill Hipkiss



Class 3 in 1946 courtesy of Cliff Worley. Headmaster Mr Reed. Teacher Mr Tootal

I remember the air raids in Titford Road School. We had to sit in lines in the cloakrooms, which were made into shelters with sandbags. We were all told to bring a book or some knitting.

Beryl Adams (née Redfern)

Moat Farm Infants & Junior Schools

Moat Farm Infants School was built on the site of Bristnall Hall Farm. It opened in 1938 and cost £45,000 to build. As Bristnall Hall School had already been established on the grounds of the old Bristnall Hall House, it would have been very confusing to call the new school "Bristnall Hall Farm School", so it was named after another nearby farm - the Moat Farm.

The Moat Farm stood just off Matty Road at the place where it joins Defford Drive. It was one of the oldest known places of habitation in Langley.

The last bit of the Moat Farm moat was filled in the 1930s, when Defford Drive was built. The last owner of the farm was William Henry Matty and, when the narrow entrance to the farm leading from Moat Lane (Road) was widened and cut-through to join the new Brookfields Road, it was named Matty Road after him.

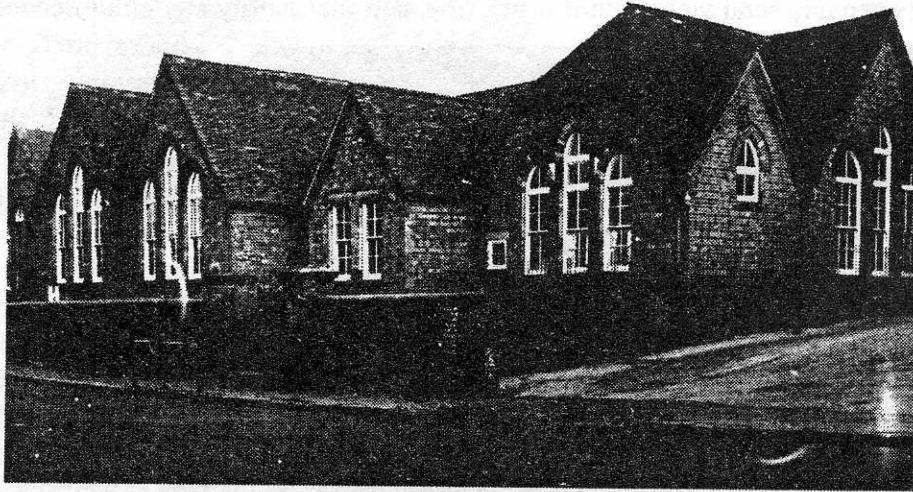
The present Infants School was built to cater for children from 3 to 11 years of age; work began on the junior building when the Infants School was almost complete. The Infants School opened for pupils to enrol for the new term in August 1938. By that September the building was used as a gas-mask distribution centre.

Verna Gibbons

St Michael's School

I remember the room where I sat to hear Bible stories each morning...the room where we had our singing lessons. We had no piano; instead we took our starting note from the tuning fork! Sometimes a member of the class (and there were fifty in a class in those days), would be chosen to sing solo. I was often their choice, and how I loved it.....the room where I pushed beads backwards and forwards along the abacus and chanted "tables" in the subject we called Arithmetic.....the room where we read stirring and patriotic poems...and where, with pen-nibs dipped in school-made ink, we learned the art of writing "up thin, down thick".....the room where I sewed by hand my own gymslip and blouse and, on one special occasion, had the privilege of embroidering some special underwear for the teacher. (Imagine that happening today!)..I remember the hall where I sometimes lined up to receive the cane from the headmaster for being late.....

Emily Tranter (schooldays c.1915)



St Michael's School, Causeway Green Road 1967

When the new term began in January 1932 I started at St. Michael's, Langley Green. It was a new idea for all children at eleven years of age to go to what were called then "Senior Schools", all those, that is, that did not pass for the Grammar or Technical schools. I had just gone twelve.

I liked it, there was woodwork and gardening, to name two subjects new to me; and religion was taught on a wide basis, other religions that in those days we were not likely to encounter in our daily lives, but it certainly broadened my view, and I've found it useful since. However, it was the first time since my junior days that I was in a mixed class, and I didn't grumble except when I was called out to the front and made to bend over to get one or more of the best; it didn't do my image much good, especially when administered by a young lady teacher - and, you know, I never deserved it.

Bill Hipkiss

St Michael's officially opened on 21st August 1893 and finally closed in the summer of 1973, the school being transferred to new purpose built buildings on the Lion Farm Estate, effectively away from Langley. St. Michael's Court now stands on the original site of the school.

Oldbury Grammar School - now Langley High School

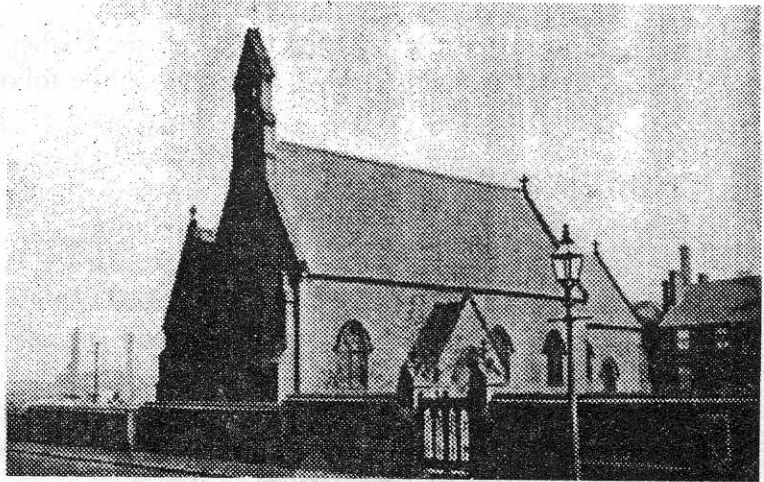
The Grammar School (formerly the County High School) in Moat Road was erected in 1926 and considerably extended in 1939.

RELIGION

This area has a long religious history, which we only have space to touch on here. Our apologies to those churches and religious groups, who have not been mentioned in this first booklet.

Holy Trinity Church

A small picturesque building, entered from a short drive, through an avenue of trees, surrounded by grass lawns dotted with old tomb stones, and completely encircled by a brick wall. It was a complete religious island, around which traffic moved north daily into Oldbury and in reverse direction along Park Lane into Station Road southwards towards the busy city of Birmingham.



Holy Trinity Church from "Picturesque Oldbury" by Rev. Henry McKean 1900

Mr Joseph Lewis, father of my life-long friend Mary, was appointed organist at Holy Trinity in 1919, and built up a regular choir of local men and boys who gave renderings of many oratorios at festival times including Stainer's "Crucifixion".

Mary Lewis was born at 108 Vicarage Road, Langley, on 21st March 1915 and my birthday was 4 days later, on the 25th. We were baptized in the same week as the Parish Magazine of May 1915, price one penny, records. Myself on 18th April, (Sunday) and Mary on 21st April, (Wednesday).

It was inevitable that as we were both born in the same road, attended the same church - Holy Trinity - often accompanied by Mr Lewis - we should become and remain firm friends.

Holy Trinity is no longer there. The island of grass remains, the trees are still there, but the wall has gone, and the noise of traffic going north and south is even heavier today than it was in the happy days of our youth.

Miss G.L. Brant

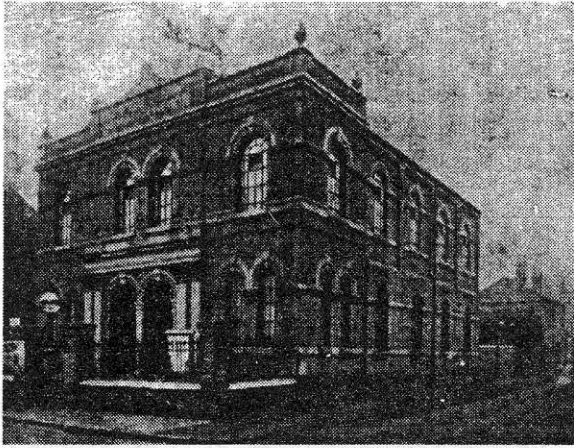
St. Michael & All Angels' Church

St. Michael's was built in 1889-90 on a field adjacent to new housing, for a population which "consists almost exclusively of the wage-earning classes; Chemical Works, Brick Yards, Glass Works, Breweries, Iron Works, Engineering Works, and Collieries constituting the chief industries of the immediate neighbourhood." Had it not been intended that it should become the parish church of the existing parish of Langley, it would surely have been officially "St. Michael & All Angels' Langley Green", which it was sometimes called. The previous parish church of Langley, Holy Trinity, half a mile away in what came to be distinguished as Langley Village, was made a chapel-of-ease to St. Michael's the next year, and so remained until its official closure in 1965. Attempts were made by every means available to reverse the decision throughout the ensuing years both while services were "suspended" and after the church was officially "closed". There were some who at once or in time joined the congregation at St. Michael's. Others formed a congregation which worshipped regularly at Titford Road schools, and each Remembrance Sunday there was a ceremony in the churchyard.

from "St. Michael & All Angels' Langley - a parish profile" by Rev. Christopher M. Beaver

Bethel Chapel

My gran lived in Broad Street and I used to attend the Bethel Chapel opposite her house. At the annual anniversary I'd go to the morning service, which would be followed by the normal Sunday School lesson, when we'd all have to file out into the back room and colour in a religious picture with crayons. I used to get my one new dress a year for this occasion.

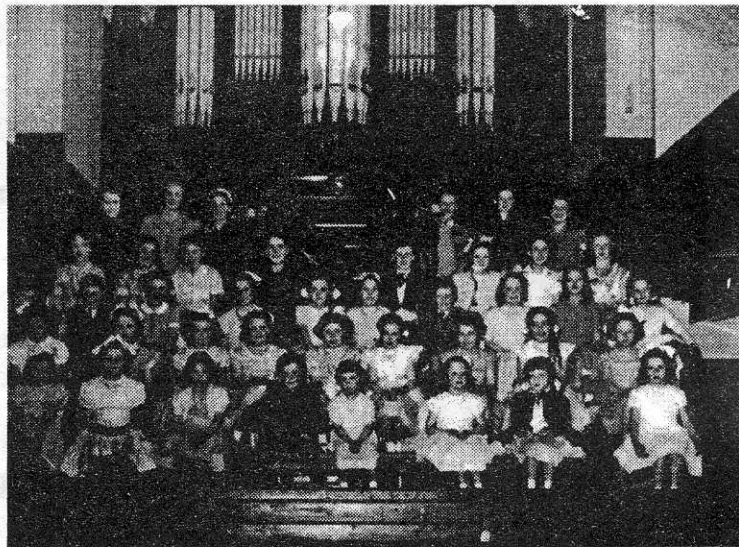


Jean Atkins

In the early 60s several churches in Langley (including St. Michael's, the Zion & the Bethel) combined their choirs to put on several festivals at St. Michaels. I sang at one of these as part of the Bethel choir. In the middle of the performance of Mozart's "Gloria in excelsis deo" the fuses blew and all the lights went out, but Mr. Walter Latham the choirmaster, Mr Raymond Isaacson the organist and the choir carried on the performance in the dark - the atmosphere was incredible - I shall never forget it.

Isabelle Shepherd

Bethel Chapel prior to renovation in the 1950s - courtesy of Isabelle Shepherd



Inside the Bethel Chapel, Broad Street showing the pipes of the famous organ c. 1951- Courtesy of Isabelle Shepherd

Spring Street Methodist

Practising for the anniversary was something to look forward to. Spring Street's was always the 1st and 2nd Sundays in May and the chapel was always full to overflowing.

Nancy Jones

I attended Spring Street Sunday School twice on Sundays and then the childrens evensong at St. Michael's. I had a Bible as the Sunday School prize for attendance.

Doris Pierce

Mr Stacey Hill was choirmaster at Spring Street and also conductor and leader of Langley Prize Band. He took over conducting the choir at the Elim Church in Ethel Street aswell. That year he was determined to have a really good anniversary, so he arranged for Elim and Spring Street to hold a joint anniversary.

Beryl Adams (née Redfern)

Edward Street Methodist

Worship first began in 1885 in a house in Henry Street, now demolished, and numbers grew so that larger premises were needed. The use of the upper floor of a carpenter's workshop at the top of Edward Street was obtained by Samuel Whitehouse, who also owned the land on which the present church was built at a cost of some £600 in 1896. In 1985 the building was under threat of closure as major restoration work was needed, costing £16,000 for materials alone. As a result of Mr Reg Payne's tireless campaign the church was saved and restored.

The church has a proud tradition of involvement, which has included football & cricket clubs, the dramatic society & the Langley Ladies & Girls Choir. The anniversary held annually in May was always a major event and the centenary held in May this year was an enormous celebration, with a wonderful display of memorabilia, from which this information is taken.

Independent Brethren Gospel Hall

This meeting hall was in what was then Barnford Road and was later renamed Grosvenor Road, after Mr Grosvenor, who was a local preacher and councillor. I attended this Gospel Hall and the Brethren did not seem to believe in having any kind of music in the hall except that of the human voice, and so we sang unaccompanied, not from hymn-books, but from a large hymn-sheet so positioned that we could all see it, with someone there to turn over to the next page when needed. Sunday-school classes were from the age of five years old, and each class was made up of four benches formed up into a square, with the teacher sitting in the middle of each group. Each year we were awarded prizes for good attendance, and also there was an annual tea-party. There was always a very happy atmosphere there, and quite a large congregation. Sadly, the hall was demolished a few years ago.

Hilda Broadbent

Zion United Reformed Church

The origins of the Zion, Langley Green go back to the latter part of the 18th century, when a group of worshippers gathered under a large tree in the village for services conducted by a Moravian minister. The tree, which stood near the site of the Royal Oak public house and the village green, was blown down in a storm on 5th November 1800. The first chapel was built on the present site in 1798. In 1913 Mr E.W. Jackson, a local builder, was elected Church Treasurer and was a guiding force in the Sunday School improvement scheme. All friends of the church who gave 10s 6d were able to lay a brick in the new building and have their names placed on a stone.

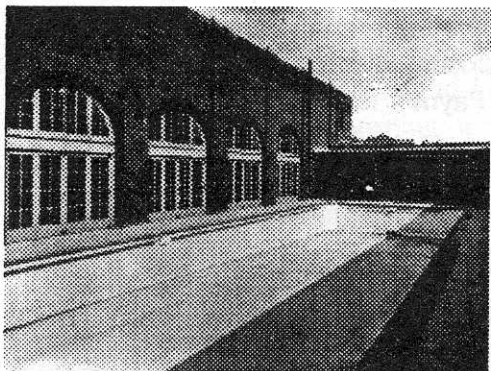
The first services to be held in the new Sanctuary, which was the fourth (and present) church to be built on this site, were the Church Anniversary services on 21st November 1975. Over the years the church has had a Young Peoples Guild, Football team, Sports Club, Christian Endeavour Society, Ladies Bright Hour, Operatic Society, Boys Brigade, Dramatics Section and Youth Club - to name only a few. In 1951 a monthly newsletter was introduced for the price of 2d, which is still produced today. In 1990 the church celebrated its bicentenary with a number of events, including the publication of a booklet "Zion, Langley Green. The First 200 Years. 1790 - 1990" from which this information is taken.



A childrens church anniversary procession c. 1900 somewhere in Langley - church unknown - courtesy of Isabelle Shepherd

ENTERTAINMENT

Swimming



Langley baths outdoor pool

out-door bath. These doors will be open in fine weather and will enable indoor bathers to use the out-door bath when conditions are favourable. It is hoped that the out-door bath, which is primarily intended for children, may also in fine weather provide an attraction for adult bathers.

The swimming bath will be open for mixed bathing from 1st April to 30th September each year; and it is proposed to use the building for public functions during the winter months when the pool will be covered with a removable wooden floor.

Borough of Oldbury Opening of Public Baths Souvenir Programme 1937

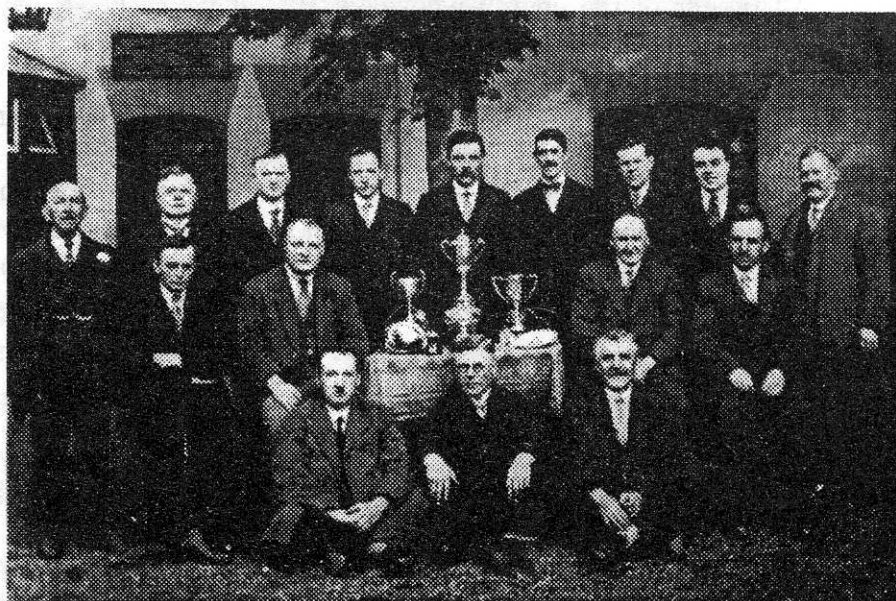
I swam in the outdoor pool on class visits from Moat Farm School. The water was always cold and I remember them having to collect the leaves from the top before it could be used.

Eric Price

Langley Green & District Allotment & Gardeners Association

An annual horticultural show is held at the Public Baths and is supported by the Allotments and other Associations who also stage their own annual shows.

from Oldbury Official Handbook c. 1947



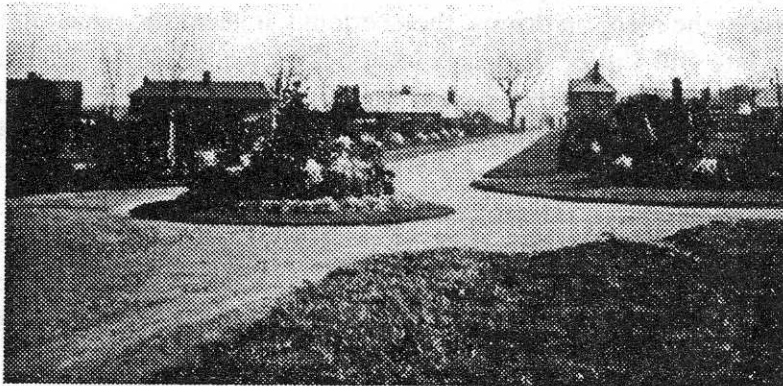
The beginnings of the Langley Green Allotment Association, who held a show every year in which my father Harry Arnold was involved. The photograph was taken in the late 20s outside the Old Cross Pub.

Dave Arnold

Barnford Hill Park

I started as an apprentice gardener in Barnford Park in 1952. I worked in the greenhouses for 14 years, where eventually we grew all the plants for Oldbury Borough. The big main greenhouse was called the Showhouse and was open to the public on weekend afternoons. Visiting the Showhouse was a very popular weekend pastime.

Dave Arnold



Postcard of Barnford Park courtesy of Audrey Allen

A popular feature of Barnford Park was the Blind Garden, so called because it was designed especially for its attractive perfume.

Langley Park

Langley Park was donated to the people of Langley by Messrs. A. Albright, W.A. Albright & G.S. Albright in 1892. The Park House was the home of the resident park keeper and the Carnival Queen was traditionally dressed at the Park House. In recent years the Park House has been derelict, but is now being renovated as a Community Centre..

Photo of Langley Park House 1968



Titford Pools

Amateur dramatic and concert parties were much in demand in the 20s; few people had radio, or wireless as it was known, especially in the early years of that decade. A Mr Jack Bridge was prominent in a concert party that performed regularly in the area, notably at Titford Pool with great success. Titford Pool was very popular when it opened up as an amusement centre, with its concerts, side-shows, boxing and boating.

Bill Hipkiss

Coronation Day Entertainment

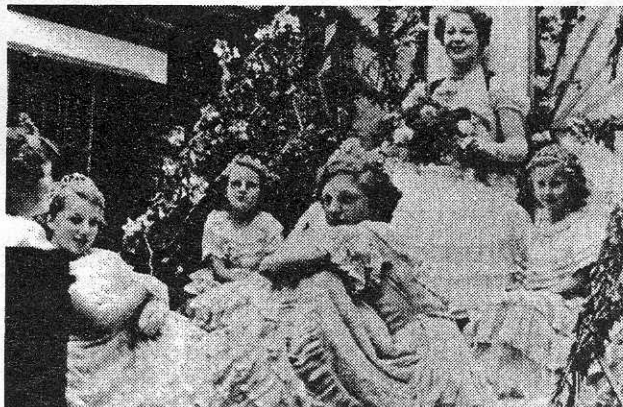
On Coronation Day, Tuesday 2nd June 1953, the Institute Hall, High Street, Langley was offering television viewing, during the Coronation Procession and Ceremony. Viewing was open to the public and there was no charge for admission. Langley Prize Band staged a concert in the evening in Barnford Park and there was Public Dancing in the car park at the rear of the Public Baths, Vicarage Road, Langley, from 8pm to 11pm.

from the Official Souvenir of the Coronation 1953

Music, Theatre and Dance

The late 20s was own-amusement time, when we had the carnivals which spawned the jazz-bands - streets got together to form one of these. My part of Langley, the Five Ways area, couldn't be left out, and Titford Road was the focal point for our contribution; not that I was actively involved, I was too young, but they formed up and practised just a few doors from where I lived. With their fancy costumes and playing their bazookas, and some, usually the men, on drums, they certainly livened the place up under the leadership, as far as I could tell, of the late Bill Cutler. It wasn't long before we began to get the hang of the tune they kept playing, and found out eventually that it was the Marseillaise, and it was, in fact, their "signature tune", and their costumes were appropriate to that theme. All this for the 1930 Carnival if I remember rightly.

Bill Hipkiss



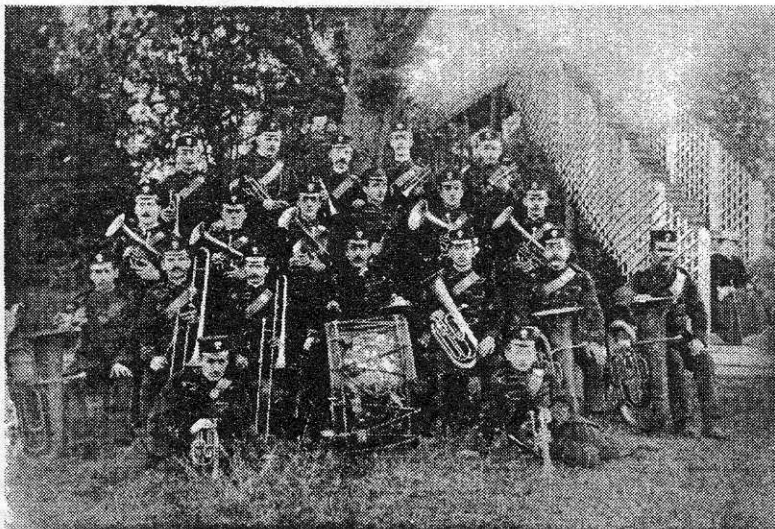
Carnival Queen Jean Beckett (née Withers) in the 50s - photo courtesy of Jean Beckett

This photograph is of my niece, who was dressed as carnival queen in the Park House by Mrs Wood. The carnival procession was a regular feature in Langley life.

Nancy Jones

Musical interests are catered for by the Langley Prize Band and the Langley & District Light Orchestra, and dancing enthusiasts by a very full programme throughout the winter months. Amateur theatricals are very popular and the numerous local companies are headed by the Oldbury Repertory Players Ltd., who have enjoyed remarkable success during recent seasons.

from Oldbury Official Handbook c. 1947



A very early photograph of the Langley Prize Band courtesy of Isabelle Shepherd

Oldbury Rep is Sandwell's only purpose built theatre. The company's first production took place in 1939 and in 1944 Oldbury Repertory Players was formed as an independent theatre company. Oldbury Rep moved to its present site, formerly that of the Spring Street Methodist Church, in 1956.

Information from the Oldbury Rep programme.

Bates Dance Hall was on the corner of Crosswells Road and Bloxcidge Street. It was a big wooden building, too large to be termed a hut, with a beautiful wooden dance floor. It was run by Mrs Bates and Mr Ernie Thompson. As children, we'd go there on Saturday mornings for dance lessons, but at night they'd hold proper dances and as a child I used to lie in bed and listen to the records being played for the dancing. The rest of the week I'd fall asleep listening to the pounding of the large hammer at Hughes Johnson.

Audrey Allen

Cinemas

Cinemas were of course a "must" in the times before T.V.. We had two in Langley, but I don't know if we should boast - the one in the Institute, the "Snob", got to be a bit of a joke really. In its time it no doubt served a good purpose, but it had outlived its day by the 1930s; when its more respectable competitor, the "Cinema," was fitted with sound the Snob's days were numbered. The coup de grace was delivered early in 1934, the Cinema was refurbished and became the "Regent" - opulence beyond belief.

Bill Hipkiss

Public Houses

There were pubs of course, I count nine - including the "Merrivale" which was a late addition, in the 30s. The "Crosswells" on the Five Ways was a venue for "free and easies" usually on Saturday evenings as I recall. Not many local people could direct a stranger to the "Queen's Head" - it was the "Model" to us all (Fredk Smith's Model Ales). Defeat has now been conceded and it has been renamed just that, the "Model"; it has become in later years a well known collecting point for the pigeon flying fraternity. The "Navigation", near Jarvis bridge on the Wolverhampton Road, I remember, being the site of at least one ox-roasting; perhaps also the "Old Cross" on Langley Green, but I have no personal memories of that.

Bill Hipkiss

The pub that's now called "The Model" was always known locally by that name, although its correct title was "The Queen's Head". The name came from the fact that one of the windows carried the words "Frederick Smith's Model Aston Ales".

Arthur Adams

The Institute

The Institute was originally built as the Langley Temperance Hall. The rules stated that the Hall might not be used "for meetings advocating the use of intoxicating drinks" or "for meetings of the bodies of people called Socialists, Infidels, Free-thinkers, or any other similar purpose which is opposed to the teaching of Christianity." During the winter the President entertained all the scholars in this Hall by a Magic Lantern Exhibition and a distribution of Fruit and Cake, and on two consecutive evenings the Hall was filled to its utmost capacity by a host of bright happy faces.

During the past year... J.E.Wilson presented to us a splendid Library of Books with the necessary bookcases, the whole costing about £200...thus, Langley is now the proud possessor of what is virtually a Free Library.

The Langley Club and Institute which has been formed in connection with this Hall has, in this last year made still more rapid strides, the membership having risen to nearly 400. There are now two large bagatelle tables for the use of the members, while in the Reading Room there is a liberal supply of papers, and also a large number of chess and draughts. This Society has instanced in its rapid growth, very markedly, the great want there existed for some place where men, and especially young men, could spend an enjoyable evening without having recourse to the public-house.

Langley Temperance Hall 2nd Annual Report 1879

The Institute was a major building in Langley and was used throughout its life by an enormous number of clubs and societies. The Oldbury Repertory Players began their performances at the Institute, the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Services were held there and the first moving pictures in Langley were shown there. On

the site of the former Institute now stands Watkins electrical shop, where they are currently celebrating 50 years of business in Langley.

A. E. WATKINS

Television and Radio Bush, Ekco, Pye, Philips, H.M.V., Ferguson, Cossor, Ferranti, etc.		Cycles Agent for Raleigh, B.S.A., Hercules, Phillips, Norman, etc.
Domestic Appliances Hoover, Goblin, Servis, and Ewbank.	SERVICE AFTER SALES	Prams Pedigree, Hubcar, and Ace

TRINITY STREET and HIGH STREET
(BRO. 1838)

Advert from the Langley Churchman 1958



A popular mode of transport for outings or excursions in the 1920s was the charabanc, seen here outside the Langley Institute- photo courtesy of Audrey Allen

The first library started in the Institute, before a brand new library was built by William Jackson on a site donated by Mitchell & Butlers Brewery in Barrs Street in 1908.



Langley Library, Barrs Street - photograph taken for the Oldbury Charter Souvenir 1935