

## The Early History of Church Crookham Garden Society

This was sent to us by Jackie Richardson nee Ballard after she came across our website when searching for information on Pyestock.



"I was pleasantly surprised that our little garden society was still going and obviously thriving.

My father George Ballard (shown here) was one of the workers who moved from NGTE in Leicester to work at Pyestock. My sister and I with mum and dad moved to 19 Champion Way in about the April of 1954. The whole estate was newly built and we had been given plans of the various designs and where possible we were able to pick which we wanted. My Dad chose no 19 because it had a long back garden so we could grow vegetables as well.

My father had always been a keen gardener but the land was almost pure sand, so the first thing he did was to sow mustard all over the garden then dug it in before the winter, we did this a couple of times and eventually we had a lovely garden.

A lot of the new tenants knew each other because they had all come from Leicester and some were chatting to my Dad one day and suggested that they form a garden society, so that they could buy bulk wholesale to save money and to get together to give advice etc. There was a meeting one evening at our house and Dad was nominated to get it started and everyone interested to join put in £1 each. They approached the Council who agreed to let them use a piece of land on the corner at the bottom of Champion Way and the end of Ryelaw Road and they were allowed to erect a fair-sized shed on it. So, they set about buying things in large quantities such as fertilizer, seeds, bulbs etc. and sold them cheaply on Saturday mornings to members. At that time the shed was at the very edge of the estate as was Champion Way,

Dad used to enjoy spending a few hours every Saturday morning along with a few others to man the "shop", it also became quite a social occasion. I used to go up sometimes too.

I was 15 when we first moved there and I had to wait until the new term in September to start school when I went to Aldershot High. My sister and I had a great summer exploring the woods and messing about in the stream. From my memories it was sunny every day! At that time there were trees as far as you could see from the end of our back garden and we used to go collecting wild strawberries and horse chestnuts. All gone now! There also used to be a large part-derelict house in the woods as well but that must have also gone by now, probably pulled down.

I have attached a couple of photos of Champion Way as it was in 1954 or 5. They are very poor quality taken by my cousin with his box brownie. The two girls sat on the grass are the myself and my sister and the boy is my cousin,

who had travelled with his parents down from Leicester to visit us in that car, it is no 19 on the left of the pair of semis opposite. The other one is of my sister Christine and a friend Ann Perry who lived up the street, I think it was a fancy dress for some occasion I cannot recall. Perhaps someone may remember us, but it is so long ago.

I hope I have not bored you with my memories but I was so pleased to see you flourishing so.

I wish you all the best and hope you keep going for another 70 years or more."



Does anyone remember this far back? We would be glad to hear from you.

---