



A family forced to move out

By Margaret Crockett

A family sits outside the terraced house in East Finchley that has been their home for many years, all their furniture and worldly goods piled around them. The mother seems lost in thought and the father and son perch uncomfortably on a box alongside two bottles of milk. The next-door house is boarded up and in fact the whole street is about to be demolished.

This is Aveton Road in the late 1950s, a street that was erased to make way for a new housing development we know today as Prospect Ring, where three high-rise blocks now stand. Steve Barber remembers the scene in the photo of the Clark family camping out in the street vividly because he was there and found it quite shocking.

He was seven when his own family was moved out of Aveton Road to Elmshurst Crescent, over the other side of East End Road. Steve lived with his mother, younger brother and their maternal grandparents.

The houses in Aveton Road had no indoor plumbing. In common with neighbours, Steve's family had an outside toilet and bathed in a tin tub in front of the fire.

As a child, before starting school and going to play with friends in their houses, Steve thought this situation was normal. When he moved to the flat in Elmshurst Crescent, he found the inside toilet and bathroom a "real luxury".

Steve remembers the child's ride-in car in the image being red and that he took his turn to pedal it up the road. He also recalls his grandparents taking him to one of the neighbours' houses where the occupants bred canaries and budgies and being allowed to choose one.

A street party also sticks in his mind since an elderly woman neighbour insisted he eat the crusts of the sandwiches that he'd filched.

For the Barber family their move to Elmshurst Crescent was a good one. His father, who had been living apart, moved in with them.

Perhaps his grandparents' own move to a flat at 12 Chapel Street was less happy. There were a lot of concrete steps and his grandfather was sad to lose his garden.

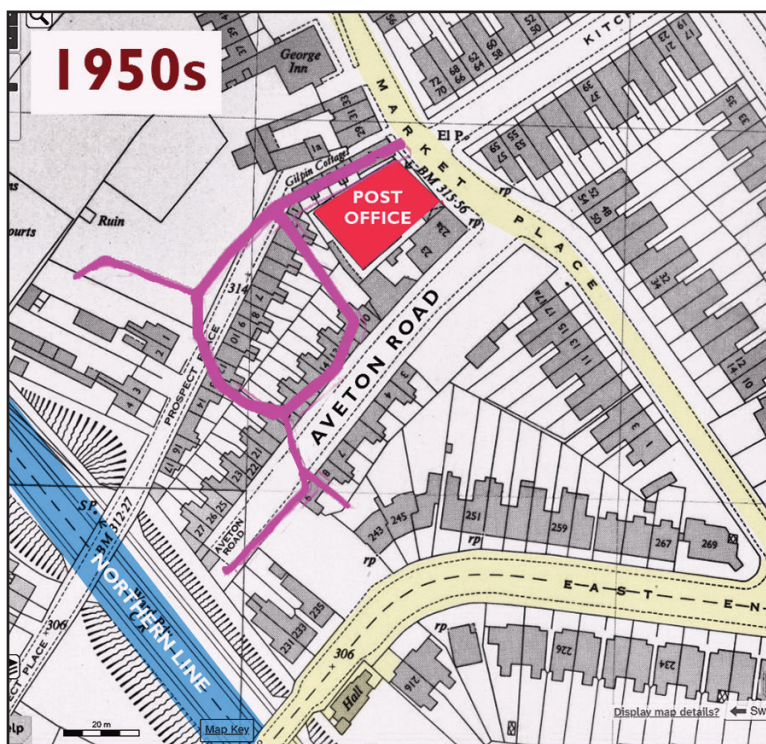
So what happened to their former neighbours the Clarks? Well, the electoral registers held at Barnet Local Studies and Archives record that they lived at 14 Aveton Road in 1955. By 1958 they had moved to Brackenbury Road.

In recent years Prospect Ring has acquired a new tower block to add to the two that were originally built in 1958. In place of narrow terraces, there are a lot of mature trees casting shade and a well-equipped play area for children.

There is a plaque on one of the blocks commemorating the silver jubilee of the Borough of



Moving day: The Clark family and their belongings in Aveton Road. Photo Courtesy John Balean, www.topfoto.co.uk



Ordnance Survey map on the left reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland) shows the location of Aveton Road shortly before it was demolished in the 1950s, overlaid with the present location of Prospect Ring. The map on the right (copyright OpenStreetMap) shows Prospect Ring and surrounding roads as they are today

Finchley in 1959, which was probably laid at the opening ceremony for the flats. Steve Barber describes being "dragged to the opening by my grandparents. The seats were hard and it was boring". Steve moved away from London when he went to university but often reads his mother's copy of The Archer when returning to his childhood home.

Former resident: Steve Barber and, right, as a boy in his garden in Aveton Road

