

**Ernesettle**  
**Everyday life in 'a lovely estate':**  
**post-war council housing**  
**and cultural incorporation**  
**1950-1980**



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## Abstract

Following the end of the Second World War, the late 1940s witnessed a dramatic and rapid transformation in working-class living conditions enacted via the Welfare State, and largely experienced through an enormous expansion in public housing. Ernesettle is a product of this boom. One of seven new estates constructed as part of Plymouth's programme of reconstruction, it follows a conceptual blueprint laid out in *The Plan for Plymouth*, a document compiled in 1943 by town planner Patrick Abercrombie and city engineer James Paton-Watson. Designed after a 'neighbourhood' model, the Plymouth Plan estates were to provide for life from cradle to grave, incorporating schools, workplaces, clinics, churches, pubs, and shops as well as housing and green space. The progressive social programme propounded by post-war neighbourhood designers strove towards social homogeneity, a strategy that sought to reconcile interests across the class and political spectrum. This thesis examines the results of those ambitions, using oral history accounts of Ernesettle to consider if and how council housing of the 1940s and 50s affected the material and social circumstances of its residents. By focusing on residents' narratives of daily life between 1950 and 1980, I document a high point in council estate history comprising: a neighbourhood culture of mutual support and lively street life; a domestic culture, closely bound to the nuclear family and the home as a site of consumption; an associational culture of clubs, sports, the church, the pub, and social club; and a working culture of full male employment, collective representation, and increasing employment opportunities for women. The function of the neighbourhood in a process of drawing working-class populations into the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural mainstream, and its subsequent association with their post-1980s expulsion to the social margins, provides a recurrent research theme underpinning my discussion of Ernesettle life as I explore how changes over time corresponded with the status of residents and their sense of place in society at large.

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction



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Author's own illustration.



Figure 1.2. Ernesettle City Engineer's Plan, 1948.  
Courtesy of Plymouth & West Devon Records Office ref. 949/11.

## Ernesettle and transformation

### 1950:

Mrs Train: It was in 1950 that I came to live in Ernesettle, in a lovely brand new house so different from our top floor flat in Stoke.<sup>1</sup> Such a lovely estate, wide open spaces, views across the river, right across to Cornwall as far as Kit Hill... Ernesettle Green had a hedge and trees running across part of it. I don't think at that time we had any football pitches but it seemed to be used a great deal more for community activities. We had a carnival or sports queen attendants. I seem to remember that there were cycle races.<sup>2</sup>

### 2014:

Thug jailed for eight years for robbing man in his Plymouth home, *Plymouth Herald*, 05/06/2014

It seems the family breeding comes to the fore, and the courts realise it, shame they cant all be steralized. And the women who drop their knickers for them looking for a lifetime on benefits, with a house thrown in, even if it is in ernesettle. (Comment posted on *Herald online*, by NoBenefits 17/08/2014, in response to news story).<sup>3</sup>

In the space of 60 years, the perception of Ernesettle (and its sister estates) has transformed from 'lovely estate on the river' - home to carnivals and community activities - to 'breeding ground of knicker-droppers', criminals and benefits scroungers. For those who arrived in the late 1940s and early 1950s Ernesettle was a paradise, its houses 'luxurious', its green spaces 'wide open' for sports and social events, its views towards the surrounding countryside generating a sense of openness and connection to the world beyond.<sup>4</sup> Today the area seems to inspire a different set of associations and prejudices typified by the attitude of 'NoBenefits' above – their implication, that only the most contemptible scum would seek a house in Ernesettle today, and even then not through choice.

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<sup>1</sup> Stoke is a village in Plymouth now consumed within the city's wider conurbation.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs Train in Mike Dunstan. 'Echoes of Ernesettle'. *Ernesettle Community Stories Project*. Plymouth: Plymouth Library Services, May 1992, p.25.

<sup>3</sup> NoBenefits. *Herald online*. 17/08/2014. Available at: <http://www.plymouthherald.co.uk/Thug-jailed-years-robbing-man-Plymouth-home/story-21193560-detail/story.html#YtO7eKRyh23pEI14.99> (accessed 19/08/2014).

<sup>4</sup> Mrs Train in Dunstan, op cit. See also Chapter 3 for the experience of new arrivals.

Why was Ernesettle loved in 1950 and shamed in 2014? At first glance the physical environment of the estate appears unchanged, the same houses line the streets, their avenues of trees now mature, majestic even; the tidal creek fills and drains daily, the shops buzz with trade. You can still see Kit Hill on the horizon. But look more closely and you will notice the absences: four schools reduced to two, former factory sites now vacant plots, a pub and a church densely redeveloped for housing, and shops boarded up or re-purposed for work clubs. Material transformations have consequences for social practices, changing the visual appearance and experiential quality of the everyday life of the estate. With fewer factories and schools, streets are no longer populated by the daily commute, on foot and *en masse* to school and work. With fewer churches and the closure of many associated clubs, the week is no longer punctuated by the collective social gatherings of Sunday school, or the Sunday family walk. And, (until at least this research project kick-started a modest renaissance in communal fete days), the annual community gathering had all but died out – Ernesettle’s carnival queen having hung up her crown in 1993.

These transformations – of perceptions, of practices, of physical environment – are important. They help us to track and to understand the *production* of space as the outcome of a complex interaction between conception (design intent and urban form), perception (the value attached to space by inhabitants and outsiders), and social practice (space in use).<sup>5</sup> The interaction of these factors has an evolutionary effect, reshaping the experience and perception of places over time. And because people are connected to places - as residents and as workers - they both contribute to, and experience the effects of, the rise and fall of local reputation. In Ernesettle it is possible to trace in the changing perception of place, transitions in the power and status of the working class in wider society, and the material and cultural entitlements that correspond with their changing levels of political leverage. The function of social housing in a process of drawing working-class populations into the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural mainstream, and its subsequent association with their post-1980s expulsion to the social margins, provides a recurrent research

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<sup>5</sup> The terms conceived space, perceived space and spatial practice are after Henri Lefebvre’s triad of spatial production, from *The Production of Space*, 1991. Oxford: Blackwell.



theme underpinning my discussion of Ernesettle life, as I explore how changes correspond with the status of residents and their sense of place in wider society.

This thesis, therefore, is interested in transformation – of perceptions, of practices, of physical environment, and of culture – as it evolved in Ernesettle during the mid to late years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It will attempt to convey (in a tentative and certainly incomplete fashion), how we travelled from 1950 towards 2016, how the construction of a place and its people, both metaphorically and physically, has altered over time and why. The story of life in Ernesettle that is told here, of the place and of its people: the Ernesettlers, is necessarily constantly on the move. It is akin to finding shapes in cloud formations – an image emerges, coalesces, only to shift and regenerate into a new picture, which is itself also moving, transforming. Maybe, by the time you read this, it will have changed again.

Capturing a long view of working-class incorporation and expulsion was not always my intention. When I started the research in 2010, I believed I was investigating everyday life during the early years of a brand new council estate in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Britain. Using oral history and archival sources I hoped to convey something of the spirit of post-war optimism and consequent social transformation that appeared to animate the efforts of Patrick Abercrombie, James Paton Watson and their fellow planners of Plymouth's reconstruction. What emerged in conversation with oral history participants, however, when looking back from the standpoint of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, was a longer and more dense narrative of change that took in several cycles of transformation: from pre- to post-war living; the tenement with shared tap and toilet to the council house with hot running water; then from thriving local community to rough neighbourhood; and carnival queens to single-mothers-on-benefits. It was a shared narrative that was both nostalgic and critical, or rather a narrative in which nostalgia had a critical function – where the otherness of the (sometimes glorified) past was used to assert difference from the inadequacies of the present. Gradually, I learned to pay close attention in oral history interviews to such recurrent observations as, 'it wasn't like this in my day', or 'it's all changed now of course', realising that these everyday phrases, so easily dismissed as rose-tinted reminiscence, were in fact 'red flags' marking multiple sites of cultural and social evolution.

I began to identify themes and trends within the oral history material that corresponded with two specific cycles of change. The first, although rooted in Victorian reformism, trade unionism, the lessons learned from the Great Depression, and the early 20<sup>th</sup> expansion of the state, coalesced swiftly and suddenly around wartime expediencies, and emerged in the late 1940s in a dramatic and rapid transformation in working-class living conditions, enacted via the Welfare State. This cultural transformation was closely allied to collective narratives: of family cohesion, of the harmonious co-existence of classes, of neighbourhood and workplace solidarity. The ambition for social harmony had a material manifestation in the built form of the post-war council estate. Modelled on an imaginary village, estates like Ernesettle translated this ambition into bricks and mortar: their decentralized, unionized workplaces providing employment security; their generous communal amenities fostering collective leisure; and their orderly streets of spacious, modern, labour-saving homes, mirroring in their architectural uniformity the social homogeneity of the imagined citizens within.

The second cycle of change by contrast, was slow, incremental, and from the mid 1970s onwards, like a dripping tap, it gradually drained away many of the material, cultural, and social gains of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Comprised of a combination of the global expansion of trade and financial markets, Thatcherism and the loss of traditional working class employment base, alongside the rise of feminism and of identity politics, this second cycle of change was propelled and sustained by individualist discourses, the significance of selfhood, and the value of personal responsibility. In Ernesettle factories rationalised in response to global competition, their management exhorting depleted workforces to take personal responsibility for the commercial success of their employers; whilst Right to Buy transferred public housing from collective to individual ownership, heralding in the process a new speculative, market-oriented and mobile relation to residential property.

The focus of this thesis lies largely in the middle years between the two cycles of change described above. Between 1950 and 1980 Ernesettle experienced something of a high point: a vibrant place, socially, educationally, and economically, it is remembered with great fondness, affection, love. It afforded residents an everyday life which was culturally rich, albeit (inevitably)

imperfect. This timeframe corresponds with the 30 year period in which social government dominated, and the high life that I describe suggests that these years are known as ‘the glorious thirty’ with some justification.<sup>6</sup> As I explain in more detail later in this chapter, these post-war years were a period of high productivity, high wages, and high consumption that briefly sustained an era of unprecedented working-class security. Council housing estates such as Ernesettle were one face of a system of public welfare (that also included healthcare, pensions, and improved education) introduced by government to reconcile the interests of capital and labour.

What this era *felt like* in an everyday context forms the core of my thesis. By focusing on residents’ narratives of daily life between 1950 and 1980, I have tried to set down some of the component parts of the Ernesettle high life: a domestic culture, closely bound to the nuclear family and the home as a site of consumption; a neighbourhood culture of mutual support, and lively street life; an associational culture of clubs, sports, the church, the pub and social club; and a working culture of full male employment, collective representation, and increasing employment opportunities for women. What I have found in Ernesettle is a place shaped and reshaped by the push and pull of political and economic transitions over time, yet a place in which, residents were active agents in the process of establishing a community that served their needs. The study offers valuable insight into the complex processes at work in the generation, stability and success of a community that are pertinent to issues of contemporary housing policy today.

### **Structure: contents, issues and themes**

Each chapter looks at local culture *on the move* and so the narrative is one of continuous shape-shifting as the dramatic and largely top-down changes of the 1940s plan become the cultural inheritance of the baby-boom generation. This cohort, in their teens and adult years, re-modelled Ernesettle life after their own image, combining an emergent popular culture with a residual and still-strong class-collectivity, to create new forms of social bonding associated with locality. Chapters are named after the influence, attitude or mentality

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<sup>6</sup> The glorious 30, or ‘*trente glorieuses*’ is a term coined by French demographer Jean Fourastie to describe the consensus government and economic growth enjoyed by many Western economies in the years after World War II.

which seemed to dominate the conception, perception or experience of the estate as it developed over time – ‘planners’, ‘pioneers’, ‘workers’, ‘Ernesettlers’, and finally, ‘losers’.

The story starts with the planners, examining the ideological and architectural ambitions of the 1940s. Imagined by planners as a village with work, housing, countryside and a mix of classes, the post-war neighbourhood was harboured within a system of social government that sought to reconcile labour and capital: guaranteeing work and regulating markets. This ideological and architectural harbour aimed to provide the spatial territory (home and neighbourhood) through which residents could participate as active British citizens, producing healthy, well-adjusted, disciplined families.

This is followed by the ‘pioneers’, the story of the first residents and the psychology of settlement that emerged as they took up occupation in the new estate. A fresh start made people responsive to new opportunities, grateful for material improvements and keen to leave behind the past. Neighbourhood life was shaped by its domestic/feminine character which fostered sociability, collectivity, and free-ranging child mobility, laying the foundations of an emergent identity harnessed to sense of place. Within the home, citizenship was activated through a combined household effort that was structured by the sexual division of labour and distinct realms of masculine and feminine endeavour which mirrored the structure of the labour market.

A pioneer mentality was supplemented by, what I term, a ‘*worker* subjectivity’ and this is the locus of the fourth chapter. Here, I examine the reconfiguration of worker identities for men and women as consumerism for and within the family helped to encourage women’s paid labour on both demand and supply sides. Full employment also altered male attitudes to the job-for-life, and masculine working-class subjectivities become more mobile. Women, meanwhile, being anchored to the neighbourhood by childcare and factory jobs, inhabited the vacuum of male worker identity, becoming the new centres of shop-floor subjectivity and solidarity.

The complementary temporality and spatiality of leisure is the subject of chapter five, which is titled Ernesettlers in acknowledgement of the ever-strengthening sense of identity harnessed to place that emerged as the first

generation of post-war babies came of age. Full employment produced an equal and opposite security of leisure which fostered a place-based leisure culture. Gestated through Sunday school, choir, youth club, pub, and social club, local culture reached maturity in the late 1960s and 70s, taking to the stage in the form of carnivals and teams whose reciprocal economies demonstrated class alignments based on place. The youth club, which served to ameliorate the transition between school and work, fostered this collective social sensibility in the baby-boom generation, emerging as an autonomous self-determined and self-sustaining working-class culture of adult leisure. Through the social club, pub, street and community, there was a collective exploration of new local, national and global cultural landscapes that drew on popular culture and cheap transport, to assert a version of working-class culture modified to suit the weakening of work-based loyalties and their replacement with allegiance to the estate itself.

Chapter 6 looks forward to the 1980s and beyond to reflect on changes and their impacts at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its title, 'losers', reflects not only the sense of loss as factories and schools closed, but also, the increasing social marginalisation of council tenants, ever more likely to be categorized as losers in the derogatory sense. Towards the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, loss of employment, the waning importance of the nuclear family, and the dominance of a market relation to property in the form of Right-to-Buy, have seen the neighbourhood cut adrift from the harbour of social government. The loss of working-class full employment has undermined the security of place-based identity by placing new demands of mobility upon the worker, and the valorization of identity harnessed to market power makes council tenants outsiders in a culture which demands a speculative relation to property.

The conclusion, chapter 7, summarises and reflects on the central theme of working class incorporation into mainstream culture via the home and neighbourhood, and how this was affected through domesticity, work, leisure, and locality. It then goes on to set these observations in the context of contemporary housing policy, asking what can be learned from the experience of the post-war social housing boom, its successes, failures, and its ultimate decline.

## Ernesettle topography, features and construction

The City Engineer's map of Ernesettle (figure 1.2), drawn in 1948, is remarkably similar to the built estate and provides a useful starting point for introduction and orientation. Ernesettle occupies an area of approximately 162 hectares / 0.6 sq. miles of former farmland, the farmsteads of Lower Ernesettle and Budshead, and Budshead Mill (shown in black on the Engineer's plan) are the only pre-war dwellings on the estate. The new residential development in the centre is bordered to the north by Ernesettle Creek/Tamerton Lake; to the west by the eighteenth century mill pond, and then the River Tamar; to the south by the Napoleonic era Agaton Fort<sup>7</sup>; and to the east by Budshead woods. These features were preserved in the post-war estate plan and provide a natural containment to the developed area of the estate – a prototype of the *green belts* that Abercrombie proposed on a grander scale for Greater London and the post-war New Towns. Ernesettle's new residential roads are arranged in elliptical patterns around an approximately central green, expressing a form of neighbourhood design that combined admiration for historic English villages, with the latest planning techniques developed in America (more on this in chapter 2). All the houses are low-rise, comprising two-storey semi-detached and terraces set in private gardens.

From infants' school to old peoples' home, Ernesettle's communal amenities provided for the local population from cradle to grave. Three schools are positioned in grounds probably chosen for their flatter topography: Lakeside Infants School in the centre, Biggin Hill Junior School to the south east, and Ernesettle Secondary Modern School to the west.<sup>8</sup> A residential home for the elderly, Lakeside Home, is located to the east of the green. There are two churches: St Aidans, Church of England, on the green; and the Methodist Church, near the shops on Hornchurch Road. Three pubs and a community centre were also proposed. Only two pubs were built - The Mayflower, top

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<sup>7</sup> Agaton Fort is one of a network of fortifications constructed in the 1860s to protect the south coast of Britain from French invasion, known colloquially as 'Pamerston's Follies' after the Prime Minister who commissioned them, and because they quickly became redundant. A total of 28 forts were built around Plymouth, four of these later became absorbed within post-war estates.

<sup>8</sup> Jeremy Gould. *Plymouth Vision of a Modern City*. Swindon: English Heritage, 2010.

centre on Lakeside Drive; and The Bull and Bush, L-shaped, just south of the green – and the community centre never materialised, although as chapter 5 will show, churches and pubs between them hosted a thriving social life.

The estate is self-contained, reachable via just two access roads: Ernesettle Lane which descends from Higher St Budeaux towards the industrial estate on the western side of the housing estate; and Budshead Road which leads to neighbouring Whitleigh. The single track railway between Plymouth and Okehampton runs along the river embankment to the west, crossing Black Bridge to Warleigh Point on the opposite bank of the creek, the site of youthful rites of passage for many Ernesettle youngsters (see chapter 3). Between the railway and the former mill pond an area is given over to light industrial development – the factories of Bush Radio (later Toshiba), Slumberland Beds (later Vi-spring), Brown and Sharpe (later Kawasaki), and Smiths Crisps all operated from here, attracted by Board of Trade incentives designed to promote the even redistribution of industries into Britain's regions (more on this in chapter 4).

The 1948 plan diverges only in a few minor points from the estate as built: the missing pub and community centre already mentioned were replaced with more housing, with further residential infill erected on some of the smaller parcels of landlocked green space. Locals refer to these 1950s additions as 'dolly houses' due to their smaller size compared to the dwellings of the immediate post-war period. By 1953 most of the neighbourhood was constructed as described on plan: the Bush Radio factory opened in 1949, infants started to attend Lakeside School in 1951, Juniors at Ernesettle School (Biggin Hill) in 1952, the shops were completed in 1952, and the secondary school opened in 1957, St Aidan's Church was completed in 1953, and the Methodist Church in 1960. Lakeside Home for the elderly opened in 1955. The two pubs were amongst the last buildings to open in 1958 and 1959.

Today Ernesettle contains more houses and fewer amenities. A decline in the school-age population led to the closure in 1981 of Lakeside Infants School, and in 1983 of Ernesettle Secondary School. The Methodist Church closed in 1985, was demolished and replaced with flats. St Aidans Church and its adjacent hall were demolished in 2004 and rebuilt at a fraction of their original size (with more flats alongside). The congregation rarely exceeds single

figures and a Sunday service takes place just once a month. A number of residential infill developments have filled in green space or replaced redundant school or church buildings, all significantly denser than the houses of the late 1940s and early 1950s. The introduction of Right to Buy in the 1980s has transformed the tenure of housing in Ernesettle and according to the 2011 census, 50% of the area's housing stock is now privately owned. Ernesettle's industrial area employs a tiny proportion of its former workforce, many of its buildings have been demolished or repurposed. And decades of lay-offs at Plymouth's Dockyard and manufacturing industries have left a legacy of high unemployment. The area now scores 1.5 on the 2015 National Indices of Deprivation<sup>9</sup>, which puts it amongst the 15% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country.<sup>10</sup>

### **Situating Ernesettle**

The thesis brings together under-studied architectural and social subject matter and explores them in parallel in novel ways. The following sections of the introduction highlight these areas of original contribution, explaining firstly how Ernesettle sits in the history and historiography of social housing, then how its development corresponds with the social movement of working-class cultural incorporation. Bringing these parallel areas of attention into view together, via the lived experience of residents, contributes towards a wider understanding of the relationship between the built environment and social justice that has relevance for contemporary policy. At the same time, the thesis also explores how the ideological import of planning, the materiality of place and its lived experience, sometimes coalesce and are at other times in tension. This is traced through the materiality of a place and its residents' experiences of it as these change through and across time. Finally, I reflect on research methods and the value of a research process that delivers reciprocal returns to research participants outside of academia. Individually, all of these areas of interest make a valuable contribution to their respective fields: architectural history, social history, the politics of social justice,

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<sup>9</sup> Ernesettle is divided between two sub-areas in the measurement of National Indices of Deprivation. This figure is an average score for both areas combined. Department of Communities and Local Government. *Indices of Deprivation Explorer 2015*. 2015. Available at: <http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html> (accessed 25/10/2015).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



ethnographic methodology, and academic ethics, together they provide a model of cross-disciplinary, ethically engaged research practice that is innovative, widely relevant and broadly replicable.

### **Historiography: Architecture – Ernesettle as a ‘Bevan Estate’**

Ernesettle is not unique, but it is pretty special. Built as a result of a local plan<sup>11</sup> and national housing guidance,<sup>12</sup> it follows a model for development that was common to many other cities as they planned for post-war reconstruction.<sup>13</sup> A best guess suggests that some 700,000 houses of approximately similar quality were built in the years 1945-51<sup>14</sup> using the exceptionally high standards of the 1944 Dudley Report as guidance (see chapter 3 for details of the report contents).<sup>15</sup> Dubbed the ‘Bevan estates’ after Anuerin Bevan, who, as post-war Minister for Health, adopted ‘a quality over quantity’ approach to the housing provision of the immediate post-war years,<sup>16</sup> the dwellings provided during this period were mainly low-rise and built according to neighbourhood planning principles. Examples can be found in cities across England<sup>17</sup>, but circumstances seem to have favoured

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<sup>11</sup> Patrick Abercrombie and J. Paton Watson. *A Plan for Plymouth*. Plymouth: Underhill, 1943.

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Health. *Design of Dwellings; report of the Design of Dwellings Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee appointed by the Ministry of Health and Report of a study group of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning on site planning and layout in relation to housing* (The Dudley Report). London: HMSO, 1944.

<sup>13</sup> Approximately 200 ‘reconstruction’ plans were prepared in the UK between 1942 and 1952, of which, 90 were published. Peter Larkham. *New Suburbs and Post-War Reconstruction: the Fate of Charles Reilly’s ‘Greens’*. Working paper, Faculty of the Built Environment School of Planning and Housing, University of Central England, Birmingham: University of Central England, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> This estimate is extrapolated from figures given in Anne Power, *Hovels to High Rise. State Housing in Europe since 1850* (1993).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.188.

<sup>16</sup> Lynsey Hanley, *Estates An Intimate History*. London: Granta, 2007, p.73.

<sup>17</sup> For example: the Mackworth Estate in Derby, the Ermine Estate in Lincoln, Tile Hill in Coventry, and Barton in Oxford. Built as Neighbourhood Units of between 3,000 and 1,500 homes, they each provided schools, shops, surgeries, churches, and greenspace. The ‘Live Architecture’ exhibit at the 1951 Festival of Britain distilled an exemplar of the neighbourhood concept: the Lansbury estate, formerly ‘neighbourhood units No.s 9 and 10 in the Stepney-Poplar area’, putting the latest planning and building techniques ‘on show’ to the nation. Becky Conekin. *The autobiography of a nation. The 1951 Festival of Britain*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003; Municipal Dreams. *Municipal dreams in housing, London*. n.d. Available at: <https://municipaldreams.wordpress.com/> (accessed 14/03/2014); Mark Clapson. *Invincible green suburbs, brave new towns : social change and urban*

Plymouth's efforts to construct housing estates quickly and to a well-conceived plan in the immediate post-war years<sup>18</sup>, providing the city with a legacy which I believe to be the most comprehensive execution of 'Bevan estates' in England.

The design and history of these estates has been somewhat neglected in scholarly research. They are most likely to be remembered as the siblings of 'Greenleigh'<sup>19</sup> in Young and Wilmott's disproportionately influential social study of *Family and Kinship in East London*.<sup>20</sup> A text which stressed the dislocation, loneliness, and embourgeoisement of an urban working-class decanted to outlying suburban estates. Alongside subsequent literature, the Greenleigh story contributes towards a dominant and over-arching historiographic impression of council house failure. There have been two strands to this narrative. The first, following the publication of *Family and Kinship* in the late 1950s, argues that better housing, the growth of affluence, and improved living standards eroded the collectivist ethos of the 'traditional' working class community. Described by Mark Clapson as producing an 'emphasis on disempowerment that haunts the orthodox social history of council housing', it is a narrative that both romanticizes the life of the slum (a life that, as Clapson demonstrates, many were only too glad to escape), and underplays the value of the everyday material, economic and social advantages of the post-war estate.<sup>21</sup>

Like Clapson, whose 1998 meta-study of remembered life on post-war estates *Invincible Green Suburbs* challenged this orthodoxy, I believe that a re-evaluation of the Bevan estate legacy is long overdue. Largely ignored by architectural history due to the moderate aesthetic merit of their modest, low-rise, often system-built domestic architecture, Bevan estates nevertheless

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*dispersal in post-war England*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998; and Lynsey Hanley. *Estates An Intimate History*. London: Granta, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Gould, op cit.

<sup>19</sup> 'Greenleigh' was the name used by Young and Wilmott, to refer to the Debden Estate constructed by London County Council near Loughton in rural Essex in 1947. Sue Taylor, *History of the Debden Estate*. Available at: <http://debdenhistory.vpweb.co.uk/Debden-History-1.html> (accessed 02,12/ 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Michael Young and Peter Willmott. *Family and Kinship in East London*. 2007. London: Penguin, 1957.

<sup>21</sup> Clapson, op cit. p.15.

hold valuable lessons in their generosity of space, and the scope and ambition of their social programme. As Lynsey Hanley has highlighted in her otherwise scathing critique of council estates, the neighbourhoods of the immediate post-war years set a new benchmark in the quality of council housing: 'for a brief period, nothing – not two toilets, not a spare bedroom, not a shed, not handcut local sandstone – was considered too good for the workers'.<sup>22</sup> The sad reversal of this sentiment through the introduction by the Conservative government of the spare room subsidy, or Bedroom Tax, as it is popularly known, in 2013 is one measure of the impoverishment of the post-war ideal of a material entitlement to a domestic space that was both generous and universal.

As a result of the *Young and Wilmott narrative*, and of subsequent evidence of council housing failure, this post-war ambition has been underplayed. Yet the history of the post-war neighbourhoods deserves to be recovered because they achieved far more than mere housing, being intended as Abigail Beach has noted, to be the foundation for a more egalitarian society. Imagined to contain a balanced mix of social classes,<sup>23</sup> the post-war neighbourhood was designed to provide 'an essential base unit in a stable and vigorous community' that would stimulate 'an active sense of belonging'.<sup>24</sup> The neighbourhood unit design concept (an evolution of the inter-war municipal cottage estate modified via a transatlantic exchange of ideas – more on this in chapter 2), saw housing grouped around a primary school and other facilities, and separated from other estates by green wedges. Championed by the Dudley Report, for ten years after the war the concept of neighbourhood produced 'a new consensus for planning in Britain' that achieved its apotheosis in the 14 New Towns constructed as a result of the New Towns Act of 1946.<sup>25</sup> Distinguished by their coherence from the ad hoc efforts of

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<sup>22</sup> Hanley, op cit., p.80.

<sup>23</sup> This aim was given legal force when the 1949 Housing Act removed any reference to housing 'the working classes', thereby extending the operations of the Act to the whole population. Abigail Beach. 'The Idea of Neighbourhood 1900-1950'. *History Today*. 45, no. 9 (1995), p. 8; and John English, Ruth Madigan, and Peter Norman. *Slum Clearance: The social and administrative context in England and Wales*. London: Croom Helm, 1976.

<sup>24</sup> Beach, 1995, op. cit., p.8.

<sup>25</sup> Anthony Alexander. *Britain's New Towns. Garden Cities to Sustainable Communities*. London: Routledge, 2009, p.76.

other English cities, Plymouth's post-war housing has been recognized as a forerunner of the New Towns, described by Anthony Alexander as Abercrombie's prototype for a process that he would later urge for the nation, Plymouth produced 'a microcosm of what was to become the national plan, by decentralizing the population into a series of satellite suburbs around the city edge'.<sup>26</sup>

Whilst neighbourhood planning was widely practiced in Britain in the years following the Second World War, implementation and quality of neighbourhood design itself was variable. Blitz damage and existing housing conditions varied between cities, with some needing more urgent attention than others. Though many local authorities adopted the new planning orthodoxy, some resumed housing developments that had been suspended during wartime and were vastly out of scale with the small communities envisaged by Dudley.<sup>27</sup> Political connections also made a difference to the speed and extent to which different areas were able to implement post-war plans. Peter Larkham states that 'the bureaucracy was immense', observing that in Torquay it was reported that a proposal for 500 houses had required consultation with 57 Government departments, and town visits by 34 officials before it was officially sanctioned.<sup>28</sup> In such circumstances experience and influence could make all the difference, and amongst the national competition, Plymouth apparently led the charge in the implementation of its reconstruction plan. Jeremy and Caroline Gould attribute Plymouth's speed off the mark to a combination of political influence and astute appointments under the guardianship of Lord Astor chairman of the city's Reconstruction Committee. As wartime mayor of Plymouth and husband of MP Nancy, Waldorf Astor was both well-connected in Westminster, and an adroit mediator of Town Hall politics. His Reconstruction Committee's appointment of Abercrombie, the pre-eminent Town Planner of the time, is described by Gould and Gould as 'an extraordinary coup' that 'gave the city a detailed insight into the workings

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.20.

<sup>27</sup> Manchester's Wythenshawe is one such case, a new settlement of more than 25,000 homes initiated in the 1930s, but largely completed post-war. Newcastle-upon-Tyne's overspill estates of North Killingworth and Cramlington are similar. Consisting of 10,000 and 30,000 homes respectively, there were effectively new towns although not officially created under the provisions of the New Town Act. A. Alexander, op cit.

<sup>28</sup> Larkham, op cit., p.3.

of the Ministry, access to the Minister and an understanding of the legislation of the 1944 and 1947 Planning Acts 14 which the other cities, including Coventry, lacked'.<sup>29</sup>

As such, Plymouth's neighbourhood prototypes provide a coherent case study through which it is possible to distill the social ambitions of planners at a distinct historical juncture, undiluted by the aesthetic and political focus that inflects histories of their New Town successors. Later derided as being 'formulaic and low density', the aesthetic qualities of the first generation of New Towns with their 'the ubiquitous pattern was of two-storey brick terraces arranged on gently curving roads' quickly became unfashionable in the 1950s.<sup>30</sup> This critical appraisal of New Town design combined with political and economic factors to reshape the typology of mass housing from the mid-1950s, heralding the end of an era for low-rise Bevan estates. The relaxation of post-war constraints on materials and manpower created a more hospitable climate for architecturally ambitious schemes,<sup>31</sup> and at the same time, the post-1951 Conservative government, whilst maintaining the high priority placed on housing completions, lowered space standards, refocusing policy (until the 1960s) on the expansion of existing towns rather than the inauguration of new ones. With greater space constraints in existing urban areas this had the effect of raising housing densities, with more mid- and high-rise flats replacing overcrowded slum clearance areas. London, always a case apart from other cities due to its size, had, since 1945, worked to higher density targets than elsewhere (200 persons per acre in the centre, falling to 100 per acre in the inner boroughs). The completion of several high-profile, high-rise exemplar estates by London County Council appeared to signal the arrival of a more favourable view of flat-dwelling, amongst planners, if not the public.<sup>32</sup> Central and local political contingencies abetted further *policy drift* with the mixed neighbourhood ambitions of the immediate post-war gradually

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<sup>29</sup> Jeremy Gould and Caroline Gould. *Coventry Planned*. English Heritage, 2009, p.85.

<sup>30</sup> A. Alexander, op cit., p. 39-40.

<sup>31</sup> The centre of Cumbernauld New Town, for example, was proposed as a single massive megastructure, rising to eight storeys in height and over half a mile long.

<sup>32</sup> Simon Pepper. 'The Beginnings of High-Rise Social Housing'. In *The Architecture of the Welfare State*, by Swenarton et al.: 68-91. London: Routledge, 2015, p.83.

replaced by mono-class high-rise solutions.<sup>33</sup> This set the stage for a boom in high-rise nationally, which took off following a 'subsidy per floor' policy introduced by the 1956 Housing Act.<sup>34</sup>

Lasting just over a decade, this boom came to an abrupt end with the partial collapse of the 22-storey Ronan Point in East London in 1968, an event which marked the arrival of a second narrative strand in the legend of council housing failure. This complementary but parallel tale has worked alongside the Young and Willmott narrative, telling an additional story of decline in which council housing became synonymous with design failure, anti-social behaviour, crime, drug-taking, single mothers, and social breakdown. Particularly associated with high-rise and other monolithic building forms, this story generated much sociological debate in the 1980s and '90s when it became evident that some council estates were plagued by a concentration of social problems including graffiti, vandalism, and criminal activity. In an effort to address these issues academic studies inevitably focused on 'problem estates' (see Power and Coleman), establishing an analytic paradigm that ascribed social success or failure to the designs of architects and planners, to the interventions of housing managers, or to the faithfulness of execution to design intention.<sup>35</sup> At its most crude, this narrative of council estate history tends to work backwards from the foregone conclusion of contemporary problems, tracing an 'inevitable' road to failure down the highway of environmental determinism.<sup>36</sup> According to its logic, bad architecture makes bad communities – even if, as in the case of neighbourhoods cited by Lynsey Hanley and Alison Ravetz for example, the early arrivals to these estates reported being very happy with their lot.<sup>37</sup> If we are to learn anything from the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.85.

<sup>34</sup> Until 1957 local authority building had been dominated by houses, with figures for the preceding four years recorded at 71% houses, 23% mid-rise (four storeys), and just 6% high-rise (five storeys plus). By 1967 the number of high-rise developments had greatly increased reaching a peak of 23% in 1967, which, when added to mid-rise properties at 29%, meant that the overall proportion of flats built just exceeded that of houses by 52:48. Power, 1993, op cit.

<sup>35</sup> Anne Power. *Estates on the Edge. The Social Consequences of Mass Housing in Europe*. Basingstoke, Hants.: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1997; and Alice Coleman. *Utopia on Trial. Vision and Reality in Planned Housing*. 2nd edition, 1990. London: Hilary Shipman Ltd, 1985.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Hanley, op cit., p. 77; and Alison Ravetz. *Council Housing and Culture. The History of a Social Experiment*. London: Routeledge, 2001, p. 161.

4.5 million council dwellings built in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, then a more nuanced appraisal is needed.

A further unfortunate side-effect of the attention to problem estates, is that between the two historiographic orthodoxies of the 1950s and the 1980s, any successes in the intervening period have been obscured, and historical counter-narratives have disappeared amidst the more immediate need to understand contemporary problems. It is, therefore, worth noting that despite the increasing volume of flatted development during the 1950s, '60s and '70s, thanks to the legacy of pre- and post-war cottage estates and neighbourhoods, council *houses* nonetheless comprised the vast majority of total public housing stock in Britain before its sell-off post 1980, a fact that has been somewhat obscured by the greater historiographic interest in 'streets in the sky'.<sup>38</sup> Alongside other motivations, then, this thesis aims to act as a small corrective to the disproportionate level of academic and critical attention paid to a minority housing form. By bringing to light the story of a low-rise, architecturally unremarkable, socially moderate estate, I offer an alternative history to the narrative of high-rise horror that dominates the popular perception of council housing.

In the chapters that follow I adopt the reverse position to the 'road to failure' scenario, starting at the beginning with the 'brand new house' and 'the lovely estate'<sup>39</sup>, to investigate in detail the whole life of a neighbourhood as it evolved over several generations. By focusing on the reported successes of a specific case study in social housing over a period of 30 years, a more rounded picture emerges of how places are made and lived, how multiple social, cultural and political forces propel change and reshape perceptions over time. In particular, attention is drawn in the chapters that follow to the importance of residents in the generation of a thriving local culture of their own making.

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<sup>38</sup> Power, 1993, op cit.

<sup>39</sup> Mrs Train in Dunstan, op cit.

## **Making space – Ernesettlers as place-making agents**

This thesis is a meeting of architectural and social history in which space-making is not only attributed to policy-makers, planners, architects and housing managers, but is also produced by an active process of occupation. Chapter contents reflect this emphasis – as a rough measure of importance planners predominate in just one chapter as opposed to residents' three. In the wider field of architectural historiography this sociological emphasis has become more commonplace in recent years. Architectural history has come a long way from the canon-building/defending of the past, with its starring cast of 'dead white men', moving instead towards an understanding of built space as being *made* as much after construction as during the design process (see Hill and Hayden).<sup>40</sup> At the same time, this more expansive view has generated a more inclusive disciplinary methodology that is as much ethnographic as it is historical, drawing on techniques that originated in anthropology and its contemporary variant, cultural studies: from the monographs and readers, which sought to 'chronicle the rise of the profession, its institutionalization, and its achievements [...] as a heroic progressive narrative' (eg. Hall and Cherry),<sup>41</sup> to studies which look more closely at mechanisms of power (capitalist/patriarchal/imperial) in which the built environment is implicated (eg. Roberts)<sup>42</sup>, to research which takes a more expansive view of the field that recognises the importance of clients and end users. Architectural historians are increasingly interested in the influence of actors and networks outside the profession.<sup>43</sup>

Taking its cue, therefore, from the 'insurgent planning histories' of Sandercock et al., this thesis goes beyond the modernist paradigm of planning history as

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<sup>40</sup> Jonathan Hill. *Occupying Architecture: between the architect and the user*. London: Routledge, 1998; and Delores Hayden. *The Power of Place. Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1995.

<sup>41</sup> Leonie Sandercock (ed.). *Making the Invisible Visible. A Multicultural Planning History*. London: University of California Press, 1998, p.3; Peter Hall. *Cities of tomorrow: an intellectual history of urban planning and design in the twentieth century*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002; and Gordon Cherry. *Pioneers in British Planning*. London: Architectural Press, 1981.

<sup>42</sup> Marion Roberts. *Living in a Man Made World*. London: Routledge, 1991.

<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth Darling, and Lesley Whitworth (eds.). *Women and the Making of Built Space in England, 1870-1950*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007; Elizabeth Darling. *Re-forming Britain. Narratives of Modernity before Reconstruction*. London: Routledge, 2007.



'the carrier of the Enlightenment mission of material progress through scientific rationality' (although that mission does, of course, feature in Ernesettle's conception – see chapter 2), to foreground also the everyday heroes of estate life: the people and practices whose actions turn a collection of buildings and spaces into a community.<sup>44</sup> The Ernesettle story is not just about Abercrombie, Paton-Watson, and the *Plan for Plymouth*, but it concerns Fred Train the rent man, Mrs Beck the choir mistress, Roger Reeve the vicar, the girls on the Bush Radio production line, and the lads in the Tug-o-War team. It is a story that includes (amongst other things) romance at the youth club disco, victories for the pub darts team, tragedy on the Tamar bridge, and the timetable of dockyard bus, all of which play a part in the shaping of people and place. Such an approach restores agency to residents, or rather, as Dorothy E. Smith corrects, it records and describes an agency which was and always is present.

A sociology that stays with people's everyday life experience, as they know and report it (including how they read and take up the texts that enter into the organization of their work) does not even have to attribute agency to people. People never lost it and hence don't have to rely on the sociologist to replace it conceptually.<sup>45</sup>

Within architectural and planning history, such a social-historical approach also counters the conventions, mentioned previously, of seeking-out distinguishing features, styles, ideas, and figureheads that have dominated architectural and planning historiography. Instead, an ethnographic examination of built space looks at these elements with a new emphasis, not on *what* they are, but rather on *how* they are implicated in the construction of particular ways of living. There is, of course, a necessary connection between design and use. Residents can only make do with the spaces and facilities they have at their disposal: as a crude example Ernesettle's local culture of food production in the 1950s was made possible by the provision of large gardens. Yet equally, food production was also helped along by council-run competitions, by tenancy regulations, by the psychic legacy of wartime 'Dig for Victory' campaigns, by a working-culture of the male provider that translated into garden produce on the domestic front, and by a leisure culture that centred on the home and so on.

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<sup>44</sup> Sandercock, op cit.

<sup>45</sup> Dorothy E. Smith. 'From the 14th Floor to the Sidewalk: Writing Sociology at Ground Level'. *Sociological Inquiry* 78, no. 3 (August, 2008): 417-422, p.421.

Henri Lefebvre's work on the production of space suggests how one might begin to unravel the mechanics of these complex and co-dependent factors, his triad of conceptualized space, lived space, and spatial practice referring approximately to the imagined and idealized 'spaces' of design, the lived experience of built space, and the everyday practices which mediate between the two. These interactions not only produce space, they are also produced *in* space: 'space is at once result and cause, product and producer'.<sup>46</sup> This added dimension means that space is not a neutral container but plays a role in shaping the social processes that can themselves redefine how space is used and understood. As Milgrom observes, '[w]hile this appears at first to be a circular argument, it is actually an acknowledgement that the production of space is a continual process, and that space is always changing, as conceptions, perceptions and lived experiences change'.<sup>47</sup> The following chapters explore this process in action, commencing with the conceived space of Ernesettle as it existed in the imaginations of planners and politicians, then considering what early arrivals brought to the estate in terms of the psychological legacy of wartime and pre-war experience. The shared project of settlement generated its own psychic and social legacy, which in turn fed into the distinctive community identity (practiced in communal space) that emerged over a period of decades.

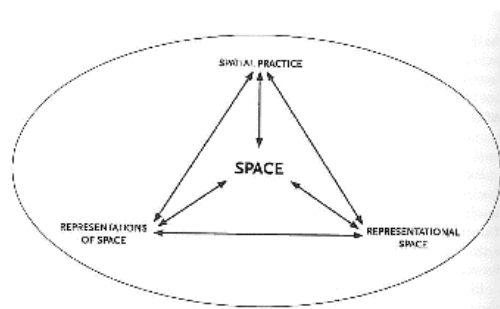


Figure 1.3. Lefebvre's triad

<sup>46</sup> Lefebvre, cited in Richard Milgrom. 'Lucien Kroll. Design, difference and everyday life'. In *Space, Difference, Everyday Life. Reading Henri Lefebvre*, by Kanishka Goonewardena, Stefan Kipfer, Richard Milgrom and Christian Schmid (eds.): 264-281. London: Routledge, 2008, p. 270.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.264 and 270.

Equally important then to an understanding of the production of space, is time. Time, as Doreen Massey points out, counters the 'common formulation of geographical place in current debate which associates it with stasis and nostalgia, and with an enclosed security'.<sup>48</sup> Such static formulations of place are vulnerable to 'ideologically driven discursive attempts to stabilize and define place', often in order to stake a claim to territory.<sup>49</sup> Massey posits instead to a 'notion of place conceptualized in terms of four-dimensional 'space-time' place being formed from the interaction of particular social relations at a particular location. Conceived in this way, 'identities of places are inevitably unfixed', social relations being dynamic, constantly produce new juxtapositions with location, which then contribute to further cycles of change.<sup>50</sup>

The contingent, shape-shifting nature of place is an inevitable consequence of the unpredictable relation between forces of disciplinary order and unruly human agency. Whilst capturing this quality descriptively is challenging, Michel de Certeau suggests that the most fruitful place to seek it is in the mundanity and detail of everyday life.<sup>51</sup> Not that everyday life is free from forces of order and oppression: De Certeau describes a society 'replete with structures', yet within this system 'totalities can never succeed totally', and memory is a vital catalyst of change.<sup>52</sup> Importantly for Certeau, psychic legacies play a significant part in shaping human agency in the present, the calling up of memories precluding any possibility of realizing place as a facsimile of design intent. As Crang explains, memories for Certeau are a well-spring of alterity:

...carry[ing] the remains of different conceptual systems from whence they came. These are the ghosts in the machine.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Doreen Massey. 'A Place Called Home'. Angelika Bammer (ed.). *New Formations*, no. 17 (Summer 1992): 3-15.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>51</sup> Micheal de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1984.

<sup>52</sup> de Certeau cited in Mike Crang. 'Relics, Places and Geographies in the work of Michel de Certeau'. In *Thinking Space*, by Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift (eds.), 136-153. London: Routledge, 2000, p. 151.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.150.

Such 'ghosts', are, according to Jacques Donzelot, vital sources of disruption and change, generating points of societal 'mutation' that can change the course of politics and power.<sup>54</sup> As subsequent chapters will show, the ghosts of memory form part of the narrative of this thesis: Ennesettle life was made meaningful for residents by the shape of their past – in poverty, at war, or at work, life experiences leaked into the present, 'old' ways persisted or were adapted, reconfiguring the legacy of planners' imaginary into ways of living.

This is not primarily, however, an excavation (after de Certeau, or rather, after the popular legacy of his work) of the tactics of resistance.<sup>55</sup> This type of diagnostic application of theory is rightly critiqued by Ben Highmore, and is here avoided. Instead, my interest principally lies in recovering a sense of the value of the mainstream whilst acknowledging its imperfections. A combination of constraint and freedom, conformity and deviance, order and aberration is therefore something which I have strived to capture in the everyday history of Ennesettle. Such a multifaceted approach permits a recognition of the ways in which design, being 'the imagination and production of a future' constructs social life in a specific image that is inclusive of those who fit its imagined shape, yet is equally exclusive of non-conformists.<sup>56</sup> Feminist and post-colonial scholarship has been especially alert to these *others* of planning history, drawing attention to the complicity of architects and planners in the urban containment and marginalization of ethnic populations (eg. in America (Thomas) and France (Ross)<sup>57</sup>, the exclusion of homosexuals, and the reproduction of patriarchal gender order through dominant constructions of feminine domesticity.<sup>58</sup> Post-war planning in Britain is no exception to these observations: constructed in the service of an idealised British working family, it tacitly or explicitly endorsed the marginalization of all

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<sup>54</sup> Donzelot cited in 'Nob' Doran. 'Re-writing the Social, Re-writing Sociology: Donzelot, Genealogy and Working-Class Bodies'. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 29, no. 3 (2004): 333-357, p. 341.

<sup>55</sup> Ben Highmore. *Michel de Certeau, Analysing Culture*. London: Continuum, 2006.

<sup>56</sup> Kim Dovey. *Framing Places. Mediating power in built form*. London: Routledge, 1999, p.1.

<sup>57</sup> June Manning Thomas. 'Racial Inequality and Empowerment: Necessary Theoretical Constructs for Understanding U.S. Planning History'. In *Making the Invisible Visible. A Multi-cultural Planning History*, by Leonie Sandercock (ed.): 198-208. Berkeley, LA: University of California Press; and Kristen Ross. *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies. Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996.

<sup>58</sup> Roberts, op cit.

those who failed to fit this mould.<sup>59</sup> However, the important correctives to planning history provided by feminist and post-colonial scholarship can have the effect of obscuring such social value as exists (albeit in imperfect forms) within the cultural mainstream. Finding a way out of this cul-de-sac was a key challenge for a project whose recurrent theme was the enthusiastic assimilation by Ernesettle residents of the social and environmental norms of the estate, and it is this challenge which forms the subject of the next section. The solution, which is to be found in Nancy Fraser's 'distribution model' of social justice, also points towards the wider contemporary relevance of a detailed study of the everyday life of an obscure and unprepossessing post-war council estate on the periphery of a provincial city.

### **Social justice – Ernesettle as a tool of redistribution and working-class incorporation**

In the main, oral history participants in Ernesettle delighted in their new homes, assiduous in their new routines of housework or childcare, in tending their vegetable gardens or tinkering in their sheds. These everyday practices forged the basis of the cultural incorporation of a class whose marginality was, in pre-war years, betrayed by care-worn bodies and the indignity of decrepit slum dwellings. To over-emphasize, therefore, the marginalizations of Ernesettle, would do a disservice to the sincerity of the participants who made this project possible, and to the stories of emancipation that they told. Yet silences and absences in the oral record (of sexual and racial minorities for instance) suggested that Ernesettle was, in its own way, an exclusive and exclusionary place. How to deal with this exclusivity, yet also recognize the significance and veracity of residents' narratives of liberation?

Nancy Fraser's work on social justice helps to save Ernesettle from consignment to the critical scrapheap, by defining two dimensions of social justice: the recognition or identity model, and the distribution model.<sup>60</sup> Too often conflated in critical appraisals of social policy, these two dimensions are both vital to the attainment of a fairer society. Recognition, for Fraser,

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<sup>59</sup> Fiona Williams. *Social policy: a critical introduction; issues of race, gender and class*. London: Polity, 1989.

<sup>60</sup> Nancy Fraser. 'Rethinking Recognition'. *New Left Review*, May-June 2000.

concerns 'the effects of institutionalized meanings and norms on the relative standing of social actors' according to alignments of identity (race, sexuality, gender and so on). 'Misrecognition' would comprise, for example, marriage laws that exclude same-sex partnerships as illegitimate and perverse; social-welfare policies that stigmatize single mothers as sexually irresponsible scroungers; and policing practices, such as 'racial profiling', that associate racial types with criminality.<sup>61</sup> Distribution, on the other hand, involves the 'allocation of disposable resources to social actors', ignoring alignments of identity, and focusing on parity of access to resources.<sup>62</sup> Whilst critiques of welfare policy have emphasized the exclusions of the former (what Fraser would term the misrecognition of racial, gender, and sexual identities), academic interest has somewhat overlooked the *inclusions* of the latter: the redistribution of material resources and its social consequences. This thesis, therefore, is alert to these inclusions. As the ambition to generate a sense of belonging via the neighbourhood suggests, post-war council housing was more than a matter of accommodation. Housing played a key role in the re-visioning of class relations with the express purpose of effecting greater equality – it was predominantly a tool of redistribution. I will argue that council housing provision was predicated on a mainstream model of citizenship that had socially homogenizing effects, bringing working-class experience closer to that of the middle classes, broadening the cultural centre-ground (see chapter 2).

Ernesettle is viewed here as a generative technology that through its material environment performed a functional operation in the process of working-class cultural incorporation. Miller and Rose's concept of governmentality is a useful tool in articulating the mechanisms by which working-class people were co-opted into the social mainstream (and, subsequently, expelled from it). According to Miller and Rose, people experience government by 'buying into it' through the adoption of given social norms and beliefs, at home, at work, in their local environment, and so on. This process of co-option into the norms of society is not a coherent project directed by a single powerful and overarching interest group. Rather, 'government of conduct' is distributed across social life 'through countless, often competing local tactics of education,

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.116.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p.116.

persuasion, inducement, management, incitement, motivation and encouragement'.<sup>63</sup> Whilst power might well coalesce around specific interest groups, in a democratic society it can only do so if it successfully 'enroll[s] and mobilize[s] persons, procedures and artefacts in the pursuit of its goals', a process which occurs via 'various more or less durable forms such as machines, architecture, school curricula, books, social obligations, workplaces, institutions and their techniques of operation'.<sup>64</sup>

Importantly, though government sought to co-opt people into preferred ways of living that government was, in the mid-century, itself shaped by *the people*. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century was a period of significant change in class relations as the working class, then comprising more than three-quarters of the British people, increasingly exerted their aggregate power through collective representation. As Avner Offer observes, labour power emerged as a form of social leverage in a productive economy that depended on human capital: whilst individual workers were expendable, as an organised group the proletarian masses had very real bargaining power in their ability to disrupt production.<sup>65</sup> This leverage was not only expressed through union representation, but became embedded in the political gains of organized labour in the form of the post-war welfare settlement. The role of the working classes in the Second World War, and subsequent capturing of the political stage in the Labour victory of 1945 reflected an increasing self-confidence and sense of national importance. As Selina Todd writes: '[b]etween 1910 and 1945 the working class transformed themselves from the poor into the people' their interests becoming synonymous with those of Britain itself.<sup>66</sup>

The post-war welfare settlement consolidated this assertion of status into material gains and benefits in kind: in housing, in healthcare, in employment protection, and in education, working class people achieved a level of security that had never before been attained. It was a security that would persist for

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<sup>63</sup> Peter Miller, and Nikolas Rose. *Governing the Present*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008, p.55.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64.

<sup>65</sup> Avner Offer. 'British Manual Workers: From Producers to Consumers, c. 1950–2000'. *Contemporary British History* 22, no. 4 (2008): 538-571, p.540.

<sup>66</sup> Selina Todd. *The People. The Rise and Fall of the Working Class*. London: John Murray, 2015, p. 9.

some 30 years. Dubbed the *trente glorieuses*, by French demographer Jean Fourastie, between 1945 and 1975 Western economies enjoyed a period of high productivity, high wages, and high consumption that underpinned an era of unprecedented working-class security.<sup>67</sup> This era was sustained by systems of government (broadly similar in all Western European nations) that sought to reconcile the interests of capital and labour via the mechanism of social insurance. Known variously as welfare-capitalism, social government, or the welfare state, according to sociologist Jacques Donzelot this model of government sought to 'homogenise the population rather than preserving it as a fundamentally divided one'.<sup>68</sup> A system that effectively promised to keep the peace by reconciling the needs of individuals and the operations of the market, had wide political appeal. As Gordon Hughes notes, the welfare state materialized a compromise between, on the one hand 'varieties of political struggle against inequality, vulnerability and oppression' and on the other 'the keen interest among economic and political elites in managing and regulating the disorderliness of markets and labour forces as ways of making UK capitalism work more efficiently'.<sup>69</sup> The reconciliation of these antagonistic factions required a discursive neutrality, producing an appeal to social homogeneity and classlessness that is particularly characteristic of planning texts of the post-war period (see chapter 2).

Although the 'glorious thirty' were not, as Todd points out, years of equality, they nevertheless 'marked the apogee of working-class people's political and economic power'.<sup>70</sup> Increased political power was mirrored by an elevation in social status as working-class culture moved from a position of social marginality to becoming *the thing* in the 1950s and 60s – central to cultural production in music, fashion, television and theatre.<sup>71</sup> Such cultural shifts were paralleled by a real and measurable redistribution of wealth, evident in the macro economic data for the period. In Britain, from the 1930s to the 1970s,

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<sup>67</sup> Swenarton et al., op cit.

<sup>68</sup> Donzelot cited in Doren op cit., p. 346.

<sup>69</sup> Gordon Hughes. 'Picking over the remains: the Welfare State Settlements of the Post-second World War UK'. In *Unsettling Welfare: the Reconstruction of Social Policy*, by Gordon Hughes and Gail Lewis (eds.). London: Routledge, 1998, p.5.

<sup>70</sup> Todd, op cit., p.7.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.236.



public wealth grew, whilst private wealth decreased.<sup>72</sup> Broadly similar data are recorded across Western Europe and in the United States.<sup>73</sup> Post-war social housing in Britain was one manifestation of this redistribution of wealth: constructed using government money collected via taxation, it formed part of the growing portfolio of publicly owned assets at a time when the total of privately owned wealth was decreasing.

The provisions and protections of social welfare drew workers into the cultural mainstream, guaranteeing their employment and supporting their capacity as consumers, as families, as home-makers, and of course, as workers. The ethnographic examination of this significant cultural and redistributive shift has, according to Nob Doran, been an area of surprising academic neglect.<sup>74</sup> Responding to Doran's call for an ethnographic response to this gap, this thesis investigates the lived experience of social transformation initiated by social welfare via the specific case study of Ernesettle.

Through its workplaces and houses, churches and greenspaces, gardens, and pubs, Ernesettle aided the material and social inclusion of its residents in the cultural mainstream of British society. This process was not without its complexities and exceptions. Modelled on a homogenizing vision of a classless English village, the post-war neighbourhood was shaped by an ideological triangle of nation, family and work, embedding racial, gender, and ableness assumptions into its very houses, streets, and workplaces (Williams, 1989). Housing estates such as Ernesettle operated as a technology of government that served to regulate conduct via ideas and practices of citizenship. Through housing allocation, tenant's handbooks, local policing, education, workplace discipline, club and society membership, and many other quotidian forms, residents of Ernesettle imbibed the everyday instructions of citizenship – instructions that they then perpetuated (or sometimes contested) in the roles of neighbour, worker, husband, wife, mother, father, child, teenager etc. Citizenship provided a standard of social

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<sup>72</sup> Thomas Piketty. *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014, p.145.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas Piketty, and Emmanuel Saez. 'Inequality in the long run'. *Science* 344 (May 2014): 838-843, pp.838-9.

<sup>74</sup> Doran, op cit.

conduct, producing a generic role model against which to measure oneself and others.

The prototype for this role model, dubbed by Gordon Hughes the 'Beveridgean citizen', was forged by context – in large part by the experience of unemployment in the 1920s and 30s and its impact on the working classes.<sup>75</sup> Social unrest arising from the Great Depression made male wage protection a political necessity, but its introduction in the form of welfare and labour rights brought, by extension, the protection of a specific type of proletarian identity and household economy in which the male wage earner dominated (see also chapter 5). The Beveridgean citizen was thus 'effectively constructed as the fully employed, married, male worker who, through his taxes, supported the state, and the state in turn supported him through the provision of social welfare'.<sup>76</sup> Housing manuals assumed a sexual division of labour between male waged employment and unpaid female domesticity, picturing home as a site of family life and leisure distinctly separate from work. Labour representation in the workplace perpetuated this binarism, favouring masculine employment rights, and a stratified education system not only reproduced a stratified workforce of largely unskilled labour, but also reinforced the gendered nature of labouring and domestic roles through its curriculum – teaching for example, sewing to girls and metalwork to boys. The tensions between a process of inclusion based on an imagined British worker/family citizen, and the consequent exclusion of other identities and ways of living are played out in the oral memories of Ernesettlers, and equally importantly, in their silences and absences.

In Ernesettle, residents were co-opted into this model of citizenship (to greater or lesser degrees as each chapter will show) through choice rather than coercion. Beveridgean citizenship offered models of masculine and feminine identity that resonated for men and women who had experienced the hardships of economic depression and the separations of war. Moreover, the simultaneous delivery of employment security and security of housing tenure created for the first time a corresponding 'security of leisure' for working-class

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<sup>75</sup> The 'Beveridgean citizen', after William Beveridge, economist and author of the 1942 'Beveridge Report' (full title *Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services*) which served as the basis of the post-war welfare state.

<sup>76</sup> Hughes, op cit. p.29.

people, which supported individual, family, and community activities. A combination of economic and domestic certainties operated alongside a powerful cultural message of what constituted 'good leisure' to foster citizenly discipline within families, between neighbours, and across the estate of Ernesettle as a whole. In this way post-war citizenship rewarded those who it enrolled into its domestic and workplace disciplines, delivering financial security, a pleasant living environment, family structure, neighbourly sociability, and free time for personal fulfilment.

One significant consequence of working-class incorporation was the disruption and re-formation of working-class identity. The aspiration for equality, whilst advancing working-class security, at the same time produced a social homogeneity that threatened to efface class. The result was a shifting social terrain in which *traditional* class alignments were reoriented as the pre-war institutions that sustained them were supplanted by the state. As Rose and Miller argue, social insurance had 'the paradoxical effect' of de-politicizing social welfare, 'expelling certain issues and problems from the political domain'.<sup>77</sup> Once unemployment and sickness assistance were transferred from voluntary, religious, or trade union groups to the state, the practical need for these groups to mobilise members to action, such as elections or strikes, was reduced, and their function as a resource for the creation of collective identities was weakened. Political mobilization was thus shifted into the technical and professional realm.

As Jaques Donzelot suggests, insurance de-dramatizes social conflicts, through 'eliding the questions of assigning *responsibility* for the origin of "social evils" and shifting the issue to the different technical options regarding variations in different parameters requires to "optimise" employment, wages, allowances etc.' Thus "insurance creates a form of passive solidarity amongst its recipients, de-emphasizing both their active engagement in collective mechanisms of providing for hard times such as trade unions or friendly societies and their individual striving for self-protection through savings."<sup>78</sup>

The aspiration for, and (to a degree) the arrival of, a new form of social neutrality therefore complicates the discussion of class of in the post-war period. Whilst the post-war settlement was modeled to meet the needs of an imaginary working-class family, its socially homogenizing effects apparently

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<sup>77</sup> Miller and Rose, op cit. p.77.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.78.

began a process of class effacement. According to Tom Bottomore, from the late 1950s, this gave rise to 'much study and discussion of such phenomena as the "affluent worker", the "embourgeoisment" of the working class, and the emergence of a new type of "middle-class" society'.<sup>79</sup> Commenting on this process in action at the time, T.H. Marshall observed 'a general enrichment of the concrete substances of civilized life, a general reduction of risk and insecurity, and equalization between the more and the less fortunate at all levels',<sup>80</sup> whilst Richard Hoggart agreed that 'the great majority of us are being merged into one class. We are becoming culturally classless'.<sup>81</sup>

Whilst the reality of this mass 'embourgeoisment' was almost certainly overstated, the very fluidity of class during the period in question makes the terms of discussion slippery indeed.<sup>82</sup> On the one hand, what Alison Ravetz labels the 'Bethnal Green' image of a romanticized, close-knit, working class operated as a persuasive discursive construction: its power sufficient to shape the very bricks and mortar of the post-war settlement as well as individuals' sense of self and class identity.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, the political and physical consequences of working-class empowerment were reshaping class experience: full employment weakening the socio-economic necessity of solidarities forged at work, and increased free time and money replacing these collectivities with associations generated by shared leisure. It is therefore essential to view the discussion of class experience contained here in the light of Kidd and Nicholls' assertion that 'classes must not be treated as fixed categories but as contextually created, constituted and reconstituted through historical evaluation'.<sup>84</sup> As Kidd and Nicholls argue, 'the challenge is to describe classes without reifying or hypostasizing them, for the historian to deal with movement and contingency not abstraction'.<sup>85</sup> This is a challenge not only for the historian but also for the reader who may well bring their own

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<sup>79</sup> Tom Bottomore. 'Citizenship and Social Class Forty Years On'. In *Citizenship and Social Class*, by Tom Bottomore and T.H. Marshall (eds.), 55-93. London: Pluto Press, 1992, p.75.

<sup>80</sup> Marshall cited in Bottomore, op cit., p.56.

<sup>81</sup> Hoggart cited in Ravetz, op cit., p. 162.

<sup>82</sup> Todd, op cit.

<sup>83</sup> Ravetz, op cit. p.162.

<sup>84</sup> Alan Kidd, and David Nicholls. *The Making of the British Middle Class? Studies in Regional and Cultural Diversity since the Eighteenth Century*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1998, p.xx.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p.xx.

assumptions of class to the text, not least because (as chapters 2 and 4 examine in more detail) the very structure of British welfare fixed and embedded many of these assumptions in its apparatus.

In place of an over-simplified and homogenised working-class, I have attempted to treat class as an economic, discursive *and* spatial relation. Every effort is made here to contextualise references to class within the specific circumstances experienced by the oral history participants, or generated by the historically situated imaginary of planners and policy-makers. In the treatment of oral material, attention has been paid to economic circumstances and to local environment – to the shaping influence of what Bourdieu termed *habitus*: the ‘taken for granted’ preferences and values specific to a social group.<sup>86</sup> As Alison Ravetz has observed, these preferences and values are often the conditioned by the immediate locality – its economy, shared culture and frameworks of personal development.<sup>87</sup> Thus, social commonalities of class must also be contextualized in terms of place. As will become clear in the chapters that follow, place (Ernesettle) is viewed as a constitutive element in the form of class consciousness that emerged as a result of the post-war settlement. Whilst class, unhitched from the *traditional* anchors of collective solidarity, was necessarily a mobile concept in the post-war period, working-class consciousness nevertheless regrouped along new alignments of shared experience – these based in and networked across post-war council estates.

This observation is key to the idea of a process of working-class incorporation effected through council housing and an associated local identity, and it forms the central core of my argument. Such an exploration of class and cultural incorporation is new to writing and research in the field of architectural history. Using archival and oral history material I draw out the connections between the architectural provisions of post-war social welfare (in the form of Ernesettle’s houses, schools, workplaces etc.) and the local culture that subsequently emerged, showing how material changes post-1975 were also implicated in the destabilization of that culture. With one very recent

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<sup>86</sup> Pierre Bourdieu. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p.72.

<sup>87</sup> Ravetz, *op cit.*, p.166.

exception<sup>88</sup>, this approach to the history of the welfare state is not found in other literature – architectural or otherwise.<sup>89</sup> Whilst numerous quantitative studies have sought to measure the rise and fall of income redistribution or poverty over the *trente glorieuse* (see Saunders for an overview), few have seriously interrogated the qualitative experience of what it felt like to live through these changing material circumstances.<sup>90</sup> As Doran argues, 'a whole tradition of scholarship has been concerned with documenting the "making" of the (English) working class yet little attention, to date, has been focused on the "unmaking" of that same class'.<sup>91</sup> Since the seeds of that unmaking are to be found in the very welfare provisions that delivered unprecedented working-class security, an examination of the process at work in the years between 1945 and 1985 can cast new light on class composition and its relationship to the architecture of social welfare.

This thesis, therefore, is alert to these dual dimensions of social justice: on the one hand identifying and critiquing the narrowness of the *ideal* Beveridgean citizen, on the other, attending to the inclusions and social consequences of a large-scale project of redistribution in the form of the material entitlement to a good home. In this way, Ernesettle's exclusions can be acknowledged without writing-off the whole project of social housing as fundamentally flawed and discriminatory. It is hoped that the thesis' conclusions can point towards a future conception of social housing which addresses the inequities of the post-war model, yet at the same time, recovers, indeed, makes a powerful case in favour of, a material redistribution via housing that attempts to generate a parity of access to a good home.

Such an ambition seeks to address the injustice of the contemporary demonization of council house dwellers typified by the quote that heads this

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<sup>88</sup> For example, in 800 pages of the OUP's bible of Western welfare, *The Handbook of the Welfare State* (Castles, Leibfried, Lewis, Obinger and Pierson, 2012), no mention is made of the impact of welfare on class *experience*. A similar silence is found in *Architecture and the Welfare State*. Mark Swenarton, Tom Avermaete, and Dirk Van den Heuvel. *Architecture and the Welfare State*. Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge, 2015. Selina Todd's history is the one exception. Selina Todd. *The People. The Rise and Fall of the Working Class*. London: John Murray, 2015.

<sup>89</sup> Doran, op cit.

<sup>90</sup> Peter Saunders. 'Inequality and Poverty'. In *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State*, by Francis Castles, Stephan Leibfried, Jane Lewis, Herbert Obinger and Christopher Pierson (eds.): 526-538. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

<sup>91</sup> Doran, op cit. p.348.

chapter. As Danny Dorling, in his recent commentary on the contemporary housing crisis, writes '[h]ow you talk about people and housing, how you build homes, where you build homes – all of this depends on the type of society you want and how that society should be arranged'.<sup>92</sup> The dominant story of the *failure* of council housing feeds into a troubling cultural mood in which council house residents are themselves stigmatized by association. Today council house dwellers are caricatured as chavs and chavettes, or Waynes and Waynettas, whose comedic form in popular television of the 1990s and 2000s mythologize the (frequently female) perpetually spawning benefits scrounger, inviting a 'form of class hatred' that has become, according to commentator Owen Jones, 'an integral, respectable part of modern British culture'.<sup>93</sup> Statistical evidence would suggest that the making of the 'chav' monster over the past 30 years has proceeded hand-in-hand with the ever-increasing separation of rich and poor and its structural consolidation through access to education and employment.<sup>94</sup> As such, the contemporary demonization of the poor and the places where they live must be read in the context of an economic and political shift which has progressively advanced and consolidated the wealth and power of the rich.

At present, the popular (media) representation of council tenants, combined with a disproportionate academic interest in failing estates and their exclusionary effects, has produced a discursive climate in which social housing is too readily dismissed as ineffective, in which we find it difficult to imagine a future for council housing. Yet this failure of imagination has consequences for the many thousands of people who find themselves poorly housed with no hope of owning their own home. The affordability gap (those unable to afford the market price of a house) is estimated by agent Savills at 70,000 people per year, and to address the under-supply of housing, in September 2015, Conservative Housing Minister Brandon Lewis set a house building target of 200,000 homes per year to 2020.<sup>95</sup> In order to tackle this

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<sup>92</sup> Danny Dorling. *All that is Solid. How the Great Housing Disaster Defines Our Times, and What We Can Do About It*. London: Penguin, 2015, p.132.

<sup>93</sup> Owen Jones. *Chavs. The demonization of the working class*. London: Verso, 2011, p.6.

<sup>94</sup> Danny Dorling and Bethan Thomas. *Bankrupt Britain. An Atlas of Social Change*. Bristol: Policy Press, 2011.

<sup>95</sup> Hazel Sheffield. *Housing crisis: 350,000 UK households unable to rent or buy without help by 2020*. 16/11/2014. Available at:

issue, we need to attend to the lessons of the past, but as a recent RICS report pointed out, 'in only twenty seven years have we delivered more than 250,000 [houses], between 1953 and 1979, and in those years social housing providers accounted for 50%'.<sup>96</sup> If there is any hope of achieving the housing volume that government ministers aspire to, then past experience suggests an increased role for the public sector in housing delivery, and such a role should be informed by a reassessment of the great period of council housing growth in the post-war era.

As Henri Lefebvre argued, it is in the material and perceived reality of daily life that social gains can be most accurately measured, insisting that 'everyday life presents the ultimate standard by which socialism's accomplishments shall be judged'.<sup>97</sup> The everyday history of Ernesettle provides an opportunity to gauge the accomplishments of mid-century social government, and there has never been a more urgent need to do so. Whilst scholarly analysis of council housing has tended to look for its failures, and has been especially (rightly) concerned with its exclusions along lines of identity: racial, sexual and gender, if social housing might provide a hopeful solution in the context of contemporary housing problems, it is also important to recover its successes. To do so we must look beyond the identity model of social marginalization and focus in parallel on questions of redistribution. In the chapters that follow, I will argue that a redistributive housing policy which gave people good homes and the opportunity to participate in a mainstream culture based nation, home and work was, in post-war Britain, a source of the incorporation of the formerly marginalized working-class. It is hoped that this timely reassessment of post-war public housing has value in the context of the contemporary housing crisis, and can enhance our understanding of the centrality of housing to the pursuit of social justice.

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<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/housing-crisis-350000-uk-households-unable-to-rent-or-buy-without-help-by-2020-a6736541.html> (accessed 16/11/2015 and 11/12/2015).

<sup>96</sup> RICS. *Residential Policy Paper 2015*. Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, London: RICS, 2015.

<sup>97</sup> Lefebvre, cited in Kanishka Goonewardena. 'Marxism and Everyday Life'. In *Space, Difference, Everyday Life. Reading Henri Lefebvre*. London: Routledge, 2008, p.118.



## Methodology, ethics and reimagining academia

This project's ethical orientation extends beyond the social relevance of the subject matter, and has informed in parallel my research methodology. My efforts to develop a rigorous ethical approach to the project were heavily influenced by Ben Highmore's exploration of Michel de Certeau's oeuvre, and the project has (I hope) remained faithful to the ambition to strive towards the sort of 'better ways of doing and writing history' that Highmore identifies in Certeau's work.<sup>98</sup> Although I have no illusions of making a revolutionary impact on an educational system in which I am embedded, and from which I benefit both professionally and financially, I am interested in 'operating at the margins of the possible',<sup>99</sup> and '[w]orking both within and against disciplinary conventions,... to produce different knowledge and to produce knowledge differently'.<sup>100</sup> Central to this attempt to work differently, has been an emphasis on research process as much as on product, and an understanding of the utility of theory – particularly de Certeau and Lefebvre – as residing in their articulation of a 'form of attention' rather than 'an architecture of interpretation'.<sup>101</sup>

In the case of Certeau, this has meant recognizing the 'the structural complicity between contemporary cultural studies and colonial ethnography', and taking steps to ameliorate it.<sup>102</sup> In respect of Lefebvre, it involves a reflexive critique of the spaces (physical and discursive) of academia. As Merrifield writes, scholars and intellectuals who operate in the academy are increasingly under assault from the space commodification that Lefebvre sought to demystify:

our space – our academic space, in our department, on paper – is itself becoming (has become?) yet another abstract space of capitalism, and we ourselves are the perpetrators, are the formulators of new kinds of representations that are inexorably tied to relations of production and to the 'order' they impose'.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Highmore, op cit.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Patti Lather. 'Working the Ruins of Feminist Ethnography'. 27, no. 1 (2001): 199-227, p.200.

<sup>101</sup> Highmore, op cit., p. 4.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p.18.

<sup>103</sup> Andy Merrifield. 'Henri Lefebvre A Socialist in Space'. In *Thinking Space*, by Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift (eds.). London: Routledge, 2000, p.181.

The 'organizational metabolism' of this institutional space has been challenged by Greenwood and Levin whose 'blunt and uncompromising' critique of academia, observes that '[a]cademics are socialized into a profession which rewards autopoietic and self-referential academic activities' at the expense of critical and socially engaged research efforts.<sup>104</sup> A professional culture which privileges peer-approval above all else necessarily restricts the dissemination of knowledge in wider circles, reinforcing the separation between an educated elite and others. To counter this possibility, Greenwood and Levin propose a future for research which 'ignores the boundaries between disciplines [and...] advocates crossing the boundary between academia and society as a basic principle of operation'.<sup>105</sup>

As part of a critique of the commodification of higher education (and the resulting exclusion of those who lack economic resources), scholars who wish to address or at least limit these exclusionary effects are ethically obliged to look for alternative ways of producing and circulating knowledge. To this end, what started out as an oral history project has morphed into a broader attempt at community engagement that combines embedded ethnography with participatory action research. The results of which (some better described as process, rather than product) are outlined below.

### **Embedded ethnography**

In the early stages of the research (when recruiting oral history participants was a practical priority) one of the first steps towards becoming embedded in Ernesettle was to volunteer in a local St Luke's Hospice charity shop for one morning a week. This meant that I was regularly present in Ernesettle, met lots of locals in an informal setting, and gained a sense of who-was-who in the area. People would come to 'pass the time of day' in the shop, and these casual (unrecorded) conversations informed my research questions and thesis, as well as providing one or two willing oral history interviewees. This weekly appointment in Ernesettle also structured my time, allowing me to spend the afternoons seeking out 'gate-keeper' contacts such as the local

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<sup>104</sup> Davydd Greenwood and Morten Levin. 'Reconstructing the Relationships between Universities and Society through action research'. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, by Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2000, p.186.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p.94.

vicar, the managers of local youth-work charity the Budshead Trust, the librarian, housing officer, and so on, who subsequently helped me to find other willing interviewees. I volunteered in the shop for about two and a half years, and during this time I gained a small network of friends and supporters including the shop manager and fellow volunteers. The friendship of this group helped to legitimate my position in the eyes of others, and was also a source of voluntary support for subsequent events.

The oral history component of the research took the form of loosely structured recorded interviews with 35 former residents which were digitally annotated and transcribed (see participant data appendix 2). Interview sessions lasted from 60 minutes to three hours, and included both one-to-one and group conversations. Some interviews were conducted alongside Ernesettle-born photographer Rob Fraser, who became involved with the project as documentary portraitist and community engagement collaborator. Informed consent was obtained from interview participants (see sample consent form and project information sheet appendix 1), who were offered anonymity although none chose to take up this option. Over the course of the project, informal unrecorded conversations with several hundred current and former residents have further contributed to a broad sense of place and its transformations over time. Discussion threads on the Ernesettle Archive Facebook group also provided broad contextual detail, and the group has been an invaluable source of fact checking – posts requesting details of shops, or names of Policemen, for example, have generated a rapid and detailed response from multiple members.

Once the oral history data collection had begun to gather pace, it became clear that change was a key theme in local memory. Before the mid-70s Ernesettle enjoyed a good level of employment, had a very strong sense of local pride, and a thriving community life characterised by wide participation in communal activities such as the annual carnival, day trips by coach, local street parties, and widespread use of communal spaces by adults and children. By the 1980s and 90s these markers of community life and local pride were in decline. This had resulted in a generational divide in perceptions of Ernesettle: older residents maintaining a strong sense of attachment to the area, their homes, and local environment; younger residents

being more likely to talk it down, want to leave, or to take an underdog's pride in the poor reputation that outsiders ascribed to Ernesettle.

Inspired by the 'lost' social life remembered in oral memory, and in partnership with Rob Fraser, I set up the Ernesettle Archive, a Community Interest Company whose mission was essentially to do something accessible, interesting, and fun with local history that could boost local pride in the present day. Rob and I wondered whether it might be possible to counteract some of the negative perceptions of the estate by providing a louder voice for its supporters – bringing the stories of the older generation to the fore and attempting to revive some of the lost communal activities. Our ambition was not to provide a forum for rose-tinted nostalgia about Ernesettle, but to unlock the critical potential of memory – to use the past as a tool for reimagining the present. In our experience of the oral history interviews, memory and nostalgia served as an assertion of difference from, and often critique of, the present – its systems, structures and conventions. Oral memory presented a challenge to the contemporary status quo, providing a source of inspiration for change and transformation.

Over the four years or so that we have been operating, the Ernesettle Archive has started a Facebook Group for sharing memories and photos; produced six editions of a hard-copy newsletter, hand delivered to 2,000 homes on the estate; initiated a residents action group to organize events; partnered with the local library to run a small history group; and participated on the local Health & Wellbeing Forum alongside residents, third sector, and public sector agencies. All of these activities have contributed towards my efforts at embedded ethnography. They have also produced their own outputs independent of the PhD project itself. The next sections describe these outputs, some of which are ongoing.

### **Facebook group**

Our Ernesettle Archive Facebook Group was an early initiative and one that is still in operation. The group was open access so anyone on Facebook could join. Its stated purpose was 'for sharing memories and photographs of Ernesettle'. We obtained permissions and uploaded a selection of photographs from local archives to kick-start contributions from others. Initially membership was slow to build, but today we have 1,400 members,

many of whom actively contribute on a weekly and even daily basis. One of the most rewarding aspects of the Facebook group is its ability to reunite old friends and acquaintances, and to act as an informal forum for shared memories. As well as fulfilling its stated purpose, the group also works as a base for sharing present day news and concerns: we have had posts for lost dogs and cats, posts for local clubs and small business services, and concerns such as crime and flooding. Of all our media, the Facebook group comes closest to the 'disorderly reality' of local life, and as such we administer the group with an extremely light touch – so far the only posts we have taken down are commercial spam. The group has taken on a life of its own with very little oversight or management and the fact that what started out as a 'memory group', has been appropriated as a means of contemporary communication, is very much welcomed.

Although impossible to summarise the contents of literally thousands of posts, the tone of local memory expressed online is broadly in accord with the history described more fully in this study. However, it is clear that the Facebook group provides a space in which members of the baby-boom generation choose to consciously celebrate their formative years in Ernesettle. Critical comments are very rare and posts dealing with subjects such as gang fighting have occasionally provoked controversy amongst members who do not recognize a history of aggression in their own constructions of Ernesettle as a place. Apparently such a public forum tends towards the uncontroversial and so in terms of historical research the Facebook source material needs careful treatment. However, in terms of community participation the large membership are clearly signalling a collective feeling that endorses the ambition of the Ernesettle Archive to 'do something accessible, interesting and fun with local history which could boost local pride in the present day'. This gave us confidence to implement other projects that explored this mission in different ways.

### **Newsletter**

Alongside the online resource, we also wanted to develop something in hard copy format to reach people without internet access. This took the form of a local newsletter designed in a tabloid-inspired A5 format, intended to be an unusual and attractive item to find on the doormat. Content came directly from the research – a mix of archival and oral history – written-up in

accessible language into short articles intended for consuming over a cup of tea. We made the most of local contacts, inviting other people with an interest in local history to contribute columns, and we dedicated several pages in each issue to present day news. The newsletter also provided useful publicity for the Facebook Group and the oral history project.

With a print run of 2,000, the newsletter is delivered to every home in Ernesettle – a task which takes approximately 20 hours. Delivering the newsletters provided another opportunity for being seen locally, to have casual conversations with people, and to get to know the geography of the estate in close detail. I now have a good sense of the lively and quiet streets, the well kept and the neglected houses, and the friendly cats and the vicious dogs! Initially Rob and I did all the deliveries ourselves, but today our network of friends and contacts in Ernesettle help and about two-thirds of deliveries are taken on by local residents.

As with the Facebook group, the newsletter consciously constructs Ernesettle in a positive light. Whilst this could be challenged as a missionary project, we would argue that such a project is a necessary counter to the numerous negative constructions of Ernesettle in contemporary Plymouth culture (see quote at the start of this introduction for a typical example). Furthermore, it is not simply a personal mission, but one which is endorsed by oral history interviewees, hundreds of Facebook Group members, resident delivery volunteers, local businesses, and local agencies who have offered in-kind or financial support for the newsletter production. There is demonstrable demand and support for a local newsletter in Ernesettle, but there is a certain lack of skill, time, or motivation to produce it within the community. Despite repeated efforts to recruit content contributors, handing over any of the writing or production tasks to local people has proved difficult, and at present the future of the newsletter remains unknown.

### **Annual Fun Day**

Another way in which the Ernesettle Archive tried to make local history accessible and relevant was through the reinstatement of the Ernesettle annual fun day. Annual summer events on Ernesettle Green had started in the 1950s and enjoyed several decades of success before declining through the 1980s and 90s. Interviews had indicated that sporting competitions, the

carnival, and the garden show, were key components of the very rich social life in Ernesettle: a way of celebrating local skills and coming together as a group. We decided to see whether these events could be reinstated. In our second newsletter issue we included a black and white leaflet: a call to arms for resident volunteers to help us organise a fun day to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain after which Ernesettle's streets are named. We set a date for a meeting in the local church hall and arrived not knowing whether one or 100 people would turn up in support. In fact that meeting attracted about 15 people who became the core team for the day itself. We called ourselves the Ernesettle Residents' Action Force, or RAF Ernesettle for short.

Guided by the RAF group and also inspired by residents' ideas posted on the Facebook page, Rob and I put together a line-up of wartime themed performances from local school bands, the ATC, Scouts and majorettes, and invited vintage vehicle clubs, veterans' organisations, charities, and history groups to book a pitch on Ernesettle Green for the day. A group of residents formed the Red Barrows and choreographed their own land-based 'air display'. Another group of volunteers formed a catering corps to feed visitors with wartime themed fare, and a resident dog expert ran a dog show. We begged and borrowed all the kit that was needed for the event: marquees, a stage, a generator, chairs and tables, tents, and bunting were all sourced for free or at 'mates rates'. Transport was provided by a local removal man and van, and by a local builder who supplied his truck and two labourers. The theme really seemed to capture imaginations and helped us to get stuff for free that might have otherwise been costly to hire. We estimate that about 2,000 people attended with about 40 residents volunteering to help on the day itself.

Further fun days have followed: in 2011 we staged a revival of the Ernesettle Garden Show; in 2012 we supported youth-work charity, The Budshead Trust, in their Jubilee celebrations; in 2013 we held an Olympic themed event; in 2014 an Ernesettle World Cup; and in 2015 a summer fete. Each event has included the core of RAF volunteers with some new members and some moving on. Since the 2010 fun day, Rob and I have initiated a gradual hand-over of organizational responsibilities amongst the residents' group. The results have been mixed: individual group members have developed skills and

confidence and the organizational burden is now distributed more widely, but subsequent events have lacked the coherent vision and scale of execution that was achieved in 2010. An important lesson – that community action is only ever possible through a combination of vision and leadership, and a critical mass of voluntary support – has informed my understanding of the significance of key people in the history of Ernesettle, but it has also led to more cautious expectations for the ability of the RAF group to fly solo in the future. Evidently, the development of skills and confidence within a community are not sufficient to sustain action unless vision and leadership can also be developed in parallel.

Another lesson from the present which informs my treatment of the past is an empirical grasp of the institutional constraints on community action (see chapter 6). Whilst the 20<sup>th</sup> century may have deserved its reputation as ‘the age of organization’, its bureaucracies seem minute in comparison to the red-tape culture of today. It is impossible to imagine that the organizers of Ernesettle’s charabanc outings of the 1960s undertook risk-assessments, criminal records checks, or purchased public liability insurance, yet efforts to mobilize community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are constantly subjected to these forms of regulation. Moreover, the culture of individual responsibility permeates everywhere, such that, as Directors of a limited company responsible for initiating the annual fun day, Rob and I are held to be personally and individually liable for public safety on the day; there’s nothing like the possibility of manslaughter action to help one take health and safety responsibilities very seriously! Health and safety has achieved its own mythical status in contemporary culture, and many of its life-saving correctives are to be welcomed, but there can be no doubt the loss of *collective* responsibility is a deterrent to organizing events for communities, with the result that community itself is no longer practiced en masse in public as it once was (more on this in chapter 5).

### **Contributing to the local NHS Health and Wellbeing forum**

As a result of the first fun day the Ernesettle Archive were much more readily welcomed as partners by a number of other public and third-sector organisations in the area. We established a good relationship with the youth service, with the vicar and church wardens, with the social housing provider Plymouth Community Homes, with the library, the Scout leaders, and the



primary school. When the NHS set up a local agents' forum to share knowledge and co-ordinate the efforts of all agencies and residents involved broadly in the well-being of the area, we were invited to participate. As contributors to this forum we meet once every six weeks to discuss local issues, and share status updates. The connection to other agencies also leverages the research material meaning that other groups can take inspiration from research data, presenting opportunities for short-term collaborations with youth organisations and the local branch library.

The value of this forum in advancing local well-being remains to be fully exploited. The participating agencies, groups and residents are committed to improving the well-being of the community but their effectiveness is curtailed by lack of time and money, or the limitations of job description or of organizational remit. Within this arena, the relative creativity, independence and flexibility of the Ernesettle Archive, alongside its association of resident supporters, has been a distinct advantage in the achievement of practical outcomes such as the fun day. The institutional remit of contributing partner agencies, such as the NHS, youth workers, or social housing providers, has proved to be a source of containment of their ambitions, so that they may only work with and for specific interest groups: the unwell, the young, social housing tenants etc. Whilst the forum as a whole works hard to overcome this (sometimes manipulating institutional criteria to be more inclusive), it is necessarily difficult to conceive of and serve a cohesive local community when institutions are pre-programmed to categorize and separate.

### **Summary and reflections**

As I approach the end of my PhD, the question of succession and exit become more pressing. Attempts by Rob and I over the past two years to handover elements of the newsletter and fun day production have met with varying degrees of success and it has to be acknowledged that at present neither would be able continue without our oversight. The patchy response to initial attempts to secure succession could be read as a failure of the project as a whole, but I think a more interrogative appraisal is justified. Helpful in making this appraisal is the distinction identified by Robyn Eversole between

formal knowledge and local contextual knowledge.<sup>106</sup> Eversole argues that given the often taken-for-granted languages and limitations of contemporary regulation, there is a need for mediators who are able to translate between local and formal arenas. As semi-institutionally allied agents, working with a community in which we were semi-outsiders, Rob and I (unconsciously) adopted the role of *translators* that Eversole describes, facilitating the local desire for community news and events by combining a flexible and imaginative approach with the willing adoption of unattractive and sometimes complex bureaucratic responsibilities.

With this in mind, the problems of facilitating succession can be read in a new light – the lack of take-up from residents for risk assessments for example, can be read as a critique of the cultural and institutional transference of responsibility from the collective onto the individual. Reframed in these terms the succession project becomes a much longer-term and more challenging one: for as long as the division between institutional and contextual knowledges exists, mediators have a useful function to perform, and part of that function must be what Eversole calls the facilitation of ‘multi-directional’ change. This requires that institutions learn from community engagement to adapt and change:

The challenge of remaking participation is to make it multi-directional. Truly participatory development does not just teach, engage and empower communities, it teaches engages and empowers the organizations that work with communities to see and do things differently.<sup>107</sup>

For Rob and I this last challenge is still a work in progress, but one that I hope we can find the resources to continue post PhD

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<sup>106</sup> Robyn Eversole. 'Remaking participation: challenges for community development practice'. *Community Development Journal* 47, no. 1 (January 2012): 29-41.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. p.39.

## Chapter 2 – Planners

The fundamental essence of planning is first, the knowledge of life and the understanding of human beings and their difficulties; and, secondly, to secure a well-balanced distribution and relationship in the use of land to ensure that the places where people live, work and play and their means of movement are arranged and shaped to obtain a maximum of health, safety, convenience, prosperity and enjoyment for everyone.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction – balance, prosperity and enjoyment for everyone

Before Ernesettle was a physical place housing real people, it existed first in the minds of planners, architects and engineers who, witnessing the destruction of the Second World War, began to imagine what the post-war city might look like. Their *Plan for Plymouth* distilled the ‘fundamental essence’ of contemporary planning theory into a vision for the city, and, equally importantly, for its inhabitants. Here, were the imagined landscapes of the post-war era, ‘well-balanced’ landscapes for ‘living, working and playing’ that would provide ‘prosperity and enjoyment for everyone’.

This chapter investigates the ideas and intentions behind the plan for Ernesettle, using source material drawn from planning texts and contemporary publications including magazines, books, and film. Informed by local guidance in the form of the *Plan for Plymouth*,<sup>2</sup> by national guidance in the form of the Dudley Report,<sup>3</sup> and by ideas and theories permeating both professional and popular discourse, Ernesettle’s design was the result of multiple influences. Here, I attempt to unravel the imagined vision to consider the assumptions behind its rhetoric. What exactly was being held in balance by post-war planning? What varieties of living, working and playing would it support? Who was ‘everyone’ and by what standard was their prosperity to be measured?

Planning texts provide the answer: with their frequent recourse to a visual polemic that contrasts sprawling suburbia with the orderly new town, these

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<sup>1</sup> Abercrombie and Paton Watson, op cit., p.11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Health, op cit.

texts reveal an ambition to create the built expression of a managed economy. In place of the *muddle* of a laissez-faire approach to urban form, Abercrombie and his contemporaries give us zoning, green belts, compulsory purchase, and other planning tools that impose regulation on commercial land use and development. In Ernesettle, roads, houses, shops, schools, greenspace, and workplaces are arranged with deliberate precision – their locations, protection, and order of construction an expression of planners' mastery over markets.

The imagined vision is important: at its heart neighbourhood design embodied the aspirations of an emergent form of social government (Rose and Miller's 'original middle way') to bring about a reconciliation of factional interests.<sup>4</sup> Polemic and binary contrast appear frequently in pro-planning texts, but rather than pointing towards resolution on one side or the other, planners' arguments typically work towards a reconciliation of apparently opposing forces. The idealised image of the English village proved to be an especially salient metaphor for the harmonisation of diverse economic and social priorities. It was presented in planning texts as a model of equilibrium: happily balancing squires and servants, town and country, man and nature, production and consumption, free markets and the managed economy, tradition and modernity, within a quintessentially national landscape. Re-imagined for a metropolitan context, this vision gave birth to the neighbourhood, a new spatial designation that was neither city nor suburb, nor countryside, nor village, but a middle territory of evenness, balance and social citizenship. Neighbourhood design emphasised this collective spirit, reinventing the village green in a modern context as a highly visible and central social space. Clustered around it, local shops, churches, pubs, and the doctor's surgery created a locus of daily communal interaction. To underpin the spirit of social unity, the new neighbourhoods also assimilated symbolic ingredients with a nationalistic flavour – of wartime spirit, of village traditions, of the countryside – at once consolidating local identity and reinforcing wider ties to the British nation.

In this respect the village ideal was mobilised not as a bucolic rural idyll, but in the pursuit of a harmonious whole: a social and spatial formation that attempted to reconcile tradition and modernity, leisure and work, markets and

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<sup>4</sup> Miller and Rose, op cit.

social needs, and above all, class conflict. Being neither left nor right, the pursuit of the harmonious whole could appeal on all sides of the political spectrum. Advocates of the village as a model of good living included socialists, liberals, and conservatives, who, for different reasons, each valued the smoothing-out of class antagonism that it appeared to promise. This cultivation of *middleness* both socially and spatially was not new, but built on the cultural inheritance of the inter-war years – a period that had witnessed the ascent of the middle-brow in literature, in domestic design, and in geographic culture. With the advent of the welfare state, however, middleness was transformed into a condition of post-war citizenship.<sup>5</sup>

This middleness was to be communicated through a coherent architectural aesthetic, as much as through the village layout. Design texts and policy documents, including the 1944 *Design of Dwellings. Report of the Design of Dwellings Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee* (also known as the Dudley Report, authored by the Dudley Committee), popular publications, and the *Plan for Plymouth*, shaped post-war domestic architecture into forms that emphasised the *democratic* qualities of uniformity and orderliness, forms that underscored coherence, equality, and collectivity. Georgian planning was admired for its visual coherence, whilst pre-fabricated construction was lauded for the democratic significance of its uniform components. Conversely, the ‘carnavalesque’ ornamentation of the speculative suburb provided a discursive foil to these architectural qualities, exemplifying instead the built incarnation of petit bourgeois distinction. In Ernesettle, these influences were translated into low-density, largely prefabricated dwellings, with architectural relief provided by bespoke designs in a neo-Georgian style.

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<sup>5</sup> Alison Light. *Forever England. Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars*. London: Routledge, 1991; Deborah Sugg Ryan. 'Living in a "Halfbaked Pageant" The Tudorbethan Semi and Suburban Modernity in Britain, 1918–39'. *Home Cultures*, 8, no. 3 (2011): 217-244; and Catherine Brace. 'Finding England Everywhere: Regional Identity and the Construction of National Identity, 1890-1940'. *Ecumene* 16, no. 1 (1999): 90-106.

Family life, and particularly child-rearing, was a further source of inspiration for the layout of the neighbourhood and the design of home. The post-war estate put a renewed focus on the importance of domesticity within a unified vision of national citizenship. Modern homes were designed to provide the space and facilities for a healthy family life with *mother* at the heart of the home, providing for the reproduction of the healthy, well-adjusted citizen. The appearance, size, and density of housing was shaped by a nationalist project to nurture fitter, healthier, and more numerous Britons for the future. Family was important not only as the basis of biological reproduction it also provided the foundation of citizenly discipline in the home. Post-war citizens were to be bound into their wider social obligations as fathers and mothers, and sons and daughters. Practices of home-care were encouraged as a means of reproducing orderly behaviours including thrift, self-reliance, neighbourliness, and child discipline that served the wider society. The post-war home was thus imagined by planners and architects as a key site in the construction and reproduction of social democratic citizenship.

So whilst class disappeared from view in the planners' vision, other stratifications and hierarchies were implicit in their discourse. Post-war neighbourhoods assumed a normative model of family domesticity based on heterosexual marriage, gendered domestic roles, and white ethnicity. Furthermore, a new class of self-appointed experts sought to lead the reconstruction process, staking a claim to professional territory (and pecuniary reward) within the expanded remit of state activity. Whilst this marked the start of what later became a professional retrenchment that eclipsed the possibility of end-user engagement, it is important to counterbalance any discussion of the top-down influences on post-war estate design, with an acknowledgement of the importance of bottom-up action. An important aim of this chapter is therefore to show (after the work of Gillian Scott), that there were both top-down *and* bottom-up pressures shaping the form of post-war neighbourhoods.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Gillian Scott. 'The Women's Co-operative Guild and Housing Reform'. In *Women and the Making of Built Space in England 1870-1950*, by Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth (eds.): 162-179. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

The influence of working women was particularly evident in the design and equipment of the post-war home. Representations made to the Dudley Committee by the Women's Cooperative Guild amongst other groups, ensured that the new neighbourhoods were populated with houses (not flats) large enough for families, with well-equipped kitchens, bathrooms, living spaces, and gardens. Within the post-war home, everyday life was to be structured with Taylorist efficiency so that leisure time could become a part of working peoples' daily reality. Labour-saving technologies and interior arrangements brought the equivalent advantages of the industrial labourer's eight hour day to bear on the home, freeing housewives from the drudgery of housework and bringing about a convergence in the middle and working-class experience of domesticity. Providing a domestic basis for social-democratic citizenship, post-war housing co-opted all members of the household into the model domestic disciplines of home care, fitness, cleanliness, and self-improvement, with wives, husbands, and children all exhorted to participate in these citizenly duties.

Thus, post-war council housing was the product of parallel and mutually reinforcing influences that emerged from the top and bottom simultaneously. There was powerful consensus on the desirability of housing reform across the political spectrum. Typical of the *historic compromise* of the post-war settlement, housing reform reflected the reconciliation of formerly antagonistic interests through an imagined social homogeneity that operated alongside and within the harmonious whole of the neighbourhood. Architectural uniformity mirrored an imagined classless citizenry, whilst at the level of the human body environmental improvements would efface the scars of toil and drudgery. In place of redundant social alignments based on class, planners posited the place-based identity of the village. With class orientations thus evacuated from post-war subjectivity, the unifying concepts of Britishness (allied to the rural landscape), and family (anchored to the home and neighbourhood) were asserted with renewed vigour. And under these unifying banners, social government sought to co-opt people into its project to reconcile political antagonisms, encouraging them to think of themselves as part of a national body of citizens, rather than affiliates of specific class allegiances. Whilst geographically peripheral, the post-war neighbourhood lay at the metaphorical centre of a cultural and political imperative to draw the numerous, but traditionally marginalised, poorer classes into the heart of

national social life – becoming, in the process, part of a harmonious vision of British post-war society.

### **Fighting muddle – planning and the reconciliation of profit and people**

Attempts by post-war planners to reconcile the interests of people and profit are evident in planning's built forms. The pattern of development made possible by state-sponsored planning (see figure 3 aerial photographs), was markedly different to its free market predecessors. Ernesettle, with its costly and unprofitable first phase construction of roads and services, its generous undeveloped green spaces, and its expensive communal amenities, demonstrated in plan a rejection of the logics of the free-market. This reassertion of control over land use was a symptom of a widely felt loss of faith in private capitalism that followed the economic crisis of the 1930s, representing, in built form, the quest for a middle way to regulate markets and prevent a repetition of the Great Depression and its social consequences.<sup>7</sup>

In planning texts *laissez-faire* became shorthand for all that was outdated, inhumane, and selfish in the pursuit of profit. Abercrombie wrote disparagingly of Victorian industrialism that privileged 'the factory' at all costs, creating a 'complete muddle' in which 'the living quarters of the workers and even the better off, [are] subordinated in every detail, crowded on land not required for industrial development'.<sup>8</sup> Left to their own devices in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he argued, the laws of supply and demand had derailed the Georgian ambition for an ordered and beautiful city, producing instead 'the mere housing of the people in as little space as possible [...] at the smallest cost'.<sup>9</sup> Such attitudes reflect an abiding suspicion of development that M. J. Wiener argues has become embedded in the national character. 'For a long time', he states 'the English have not felt comfortable with "progress" [...] adopting a conception of Englishness that virtually excluded industrialism'.<sup>10</sup> This

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<sup>7</sup> Piketty, op cit., p.137.

<sup>8</sup> Patrick Abercrombie. *County of London Plan*. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1943, p.38.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.20.

<sup>10</sup> Martin, J. Wiener. *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*. 1992. London: Penguin, 1982., p.5.



'complex, entrenched cultural syndrome', perpetuated particularly by the middle and upper classes, viewed the rural landscape as the essence of Englishness, and industrial capitalism as its enemy. Certainly this view of landscape was a common position to planners of the inter-war years (see Matless on planner/preservationism), but rather than being anti-progress as Weiner would have it, planning sought to reconcile polarities such that profit and people might happily coexist.<sup>11</sup>

Whilst the 19<sup>th</sup> century city was viewed as the product of the industrial capitalist's demand for labour, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century a new class of urban profiteer emerged – the speculative builder. Buoyed by demand from a growing middle-class<sup>12</sup>, falling prices for labour and materials, and the wider availability of mortgage credit, a commercial building boom produced 2,886,000 homes between the two world wars.<sup>13</sup> On the periphery of towns and cities across the country new developments of primarily semi-detached homes sprang up, often following the route of existing road and rail networks, creating ribbons of housing development against a semi-rural backdrop. Largely populated by new arrivals to the middle-class, critics viewed this exodus to the suburb as a condensation of the *nouveau petite bourgeoisie*, an anathema to those who despised pretension and to those who hoped for social harmony alike.<sup>14</sup>

The land-use pattern of suburbia reflected the economies of a highly competitive market: speculative development, often undertaken by small firms at very low profit margins, was necessarily piece-meal – each street had to be sold at a profit before this money could be reinvested in the next project.<sup>15</sup> Equally, the tendency of speculative suburbia to follow existing transport infrastructure was related to the lower cost of providing utilities in areas where water, gas, and electricity mains were already laid. Communal amenities and employment were rarely part of the speculative builder's development –

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<sup>11</sup> David Matless. *Landscape and Englishness*. London: Reaktion Books, 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Measured in terms of non-manual occupations, the middle class increased from 20.3% to 30.4% of the total population between 1911 and 1951. John Burnett. *A social history of housing, 1815-1985*. London: Methuen, 1986.

<sup>13</sup> Burnett, op cit.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Oliver, Ian Davis, and Ian Bentley. *Dunroamin: The Suburban Semi and Its Enemies*. London: Pimlico, 1981.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

parkland and picturesque layout were unlikely to yield financial returns, commercial and industrial developments were too large and risky for the small builder to consider.<sup>16</sup> As a consequence, inter-war suburbs often became residential dormitories by default, without workplaces or centres of social activity such as shops and schools. They were viewed as encouraging a lifestyle that was insular and privatised (see also page 100).

By contrast, post-war housing was self-consciously community oriented. The landscape of Ernesettle reflects town planners' ambition to not only control markets, but also to produce spaces of social harmony and legibility. Modelled on spatial formations inspired by studies of the English village, the post-war estate put community on the centre stage of the reinvented *village green*. Re-imagined for a metropolitan context, this vision gave birth to the neighbourhood, a new spatial designation that attempted the harmonious reconciliation of town and country, tradition and modernity, and leisure and work, and sought above all to homogenise social class.

### **'Socially efficient' neighbourhoods – spatial form and the imaginary village**

As a model of community, the village was much dissected in 20<sup>th</sup> century planning literature as planners sought to connect its spatial arrangement with its (imagined) social advantages (e.g. Sharp and Bonham-Carter).<sup>17</sup> Certain layouts were identified as being 'socially efficient' by virtue of their propensity to foster spontaneous interaction. This attention to enviro-social effects was accompanied by a romantic representation of village life which glossed over the hierarchical order of the past in the service of a harmonious and classless vision of the future. Village life conjured a vision of an alternative collectivity, a social solidarity that was anchored in *place* rather than class.

Chief amongst the village's perceived spatial advantages was its inward focus, a built form which directed attention towards its social centre. Thomas Sharp, a contemporary of Abercrombie and author of the post-war plan for neighbouring Exeter, was an influential advocate of the village model.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Sharp. *Anatomy of a Village*. Penguin, 1946; and Victor Bonham-Carter. *The English Village*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1952.

Figure 2.1.

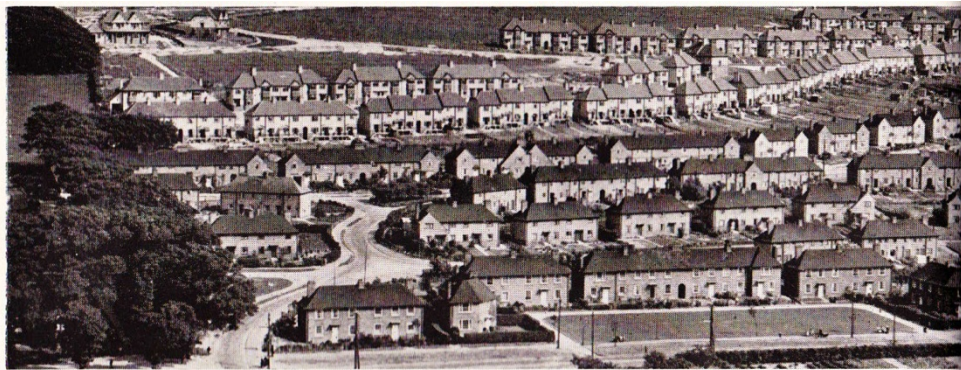


PLATE 6: THE CITY

The great rehousing movement between the two wars should have been a town building movement. But instead it resulted in more and more domitory suburbs, providing very much improved physical conditions with gardens for millions of people. Here there was fresh air, and sunlight, and running water inside the houses, and kitchens and bathrooms. But the wage-earners had to spend a large part of their incomes on tedious journeys to work while the social interests of a real town life were lacking. There was little here to encourage the housewife to take her proper place in the life of the neighbourhood. Much more agricultural land was used in this patchwork sprawl than if the same number of houses had been grouped in properly sited new towns.



Ribbon development, viewed by planners as the scourge of the countryside, reflected the economics of speculative development following existing infrastructure to reduce the cost of installing utilities and roads. When profit margins were allowed to determine the built environment in this way, the natural landscape was not the only casualty. As Gilbert and Elizabeth McAllister observed in *Homes, Towns and Countryside*, a lack of 'real town social interests' in the speculative suburb also prevented the housewife from taking her 'proper place in the life of the neighbourhood', confining her to a life of isolated domesticity.<sup>18</sup>

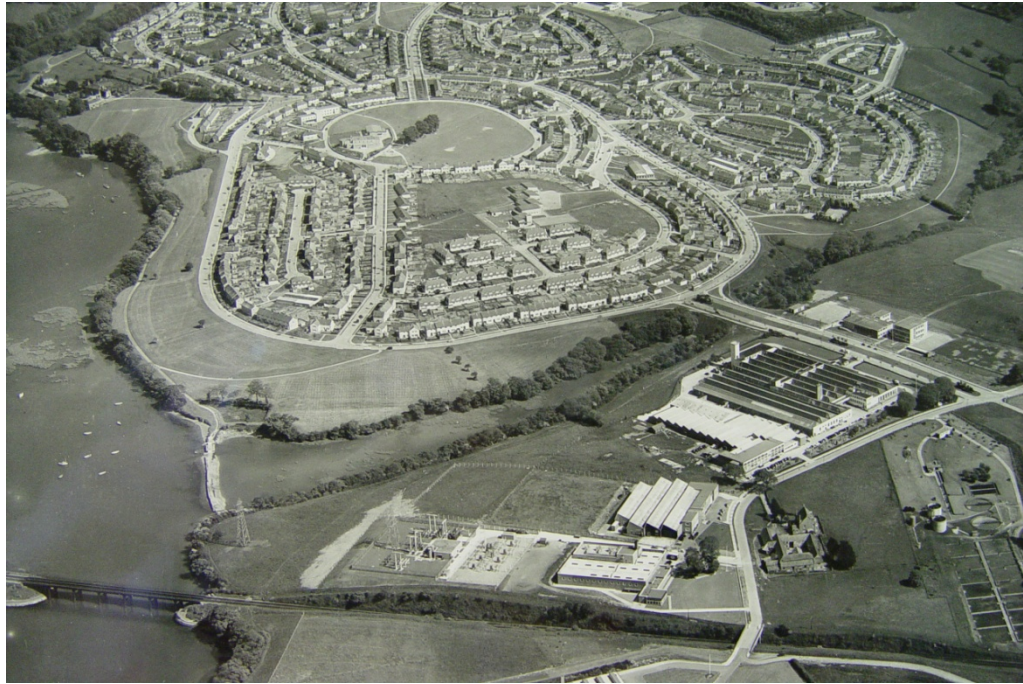
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<sup>18</sup> Gilbert McAllister and Elizabeth McAllister (eds.). *Homes, Towns and Countryside. A Practical Plan for Britain*. London: Batsford, 1945, p.xxvii.

Figure 2.2.



Aerial photographs showing the Ernesettle estate under construction c. 1946-9, and (next page) the completed estate circa 1961.



In contrast to the ribbon development of the speculative suburb, the layout of the publicly-funded *planned* estate was not shaped by economic caution. Expensive roads and services were laid first – an enormous cost that few speculative builders would have been able to carry. Houses followed, and in Ernesettle, workplaces and schools were next, their local provision ensuring that the estate did not become a mere residential dormitory. Greenspace was protected for public enjoyment, shopping parades and churches provided to aid the cultivation of social life.

Photographs courtesy of Plymouth and West Devon Records Office (PWDRO), refs. 1418/1785, PCC/76/5/1291 and 1418/18842.

Sharp's Penguin publication *Anatomy of a Village* responded to the recommendations of the 1942 Scott Report<sup>19</sup> for the reinvigoration and modernisation of the countryside, by setting out the principles of post-war village planning. Appraising the various historical village-forms for their suitability as models for future development, Sharp favoured 'The Squared Village', whose 'readily appreciated plan form' made it more easily recognisable as a whole, 'more able to convey a sense that the village is home of a community'.<sup>20</sup> Victor Bonham-Carter, writing his 'informative survey of the English Village' in 1952, also noted the connection between physical form and social visibility:

the shape of the village has a direct bearing upon its vitality [...] the square has many advantages. Chiefly it lends itself to the creation of a strong focus.<sup>21</sup>

Abercrombie, who in the *Plan for Plymouth* lamented the 'unfinished scattered zone' of Plymouth's inter-war suburbs, that had 'no focal point [and] in consequence a complete lack of cohesion and sense of community', would no doubt have agreed.<sup>22</sup>

In the squared village, the architectural containment of views provided a psychologically satisfying sense of local climax. This form, which saw the principle buildings of the village arranged around a rectangular green, is directly analogous to Abercrombie's Community Centre. The slightly off-centre, elevated perspective view of a proposed community centre depicted in the *Plan for Plymouth* even mirrors the viewpoint of Hugh Casson's cover drawing for *Anatomy of a Village* – the angle of view contributing to the sense of enclosure.

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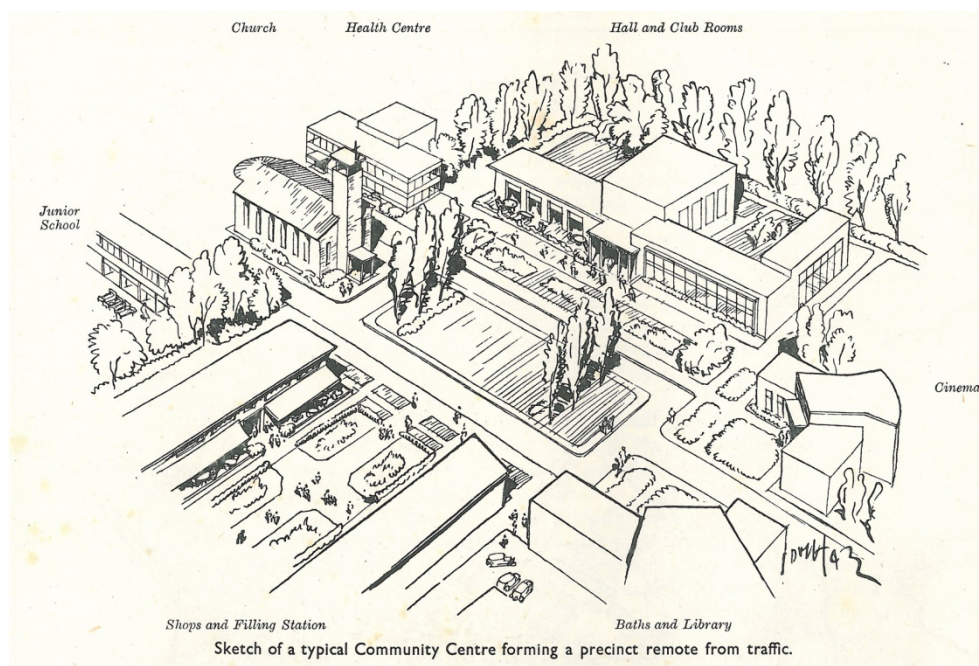
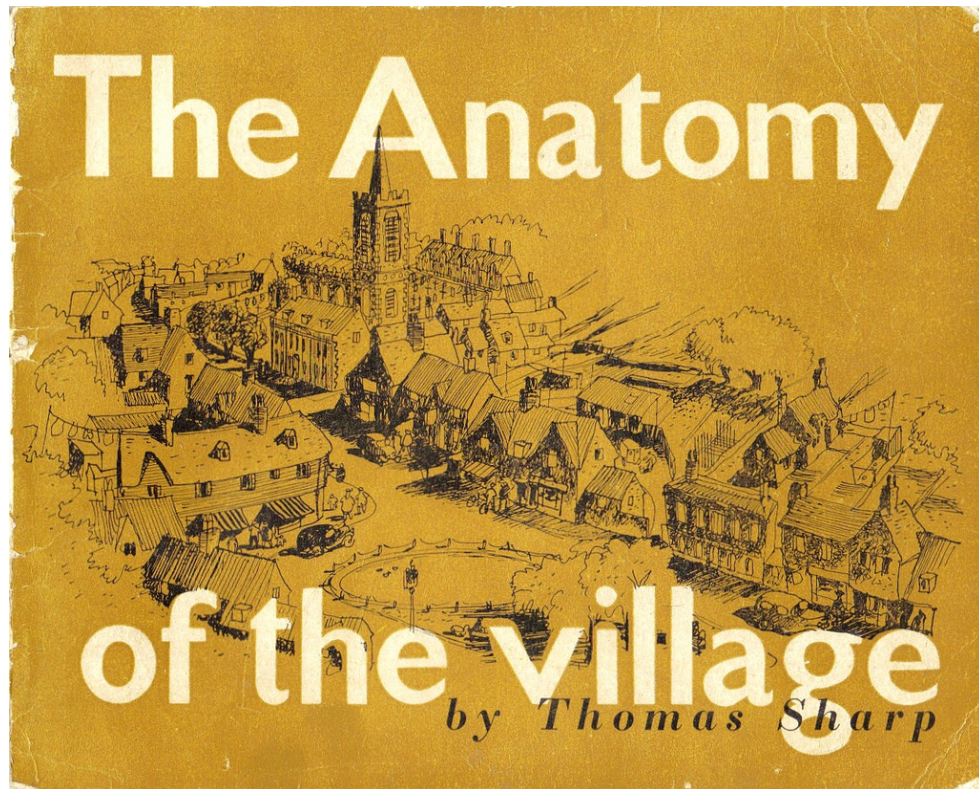
<sup>19</sup> The *Scott Report*, also known as the *Report of the Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas*, was published by H.M. Stationer's Office in August 1942. Sharp acted as Secretary on the Scott Report whilst seconded to the Ministry of Works and Buildings, 1941-43. He was also Chairman of a technical group that produced an appendix to *The Design of Dwellings* entitled *Site Planning and Layout in Relation to Housing*. His contributions to town planning included the Pelican paperback *Town Planning*, 1940; reconstruction plans for Exeter, Durham and Oxford; and Presidency of the Town Planning Institute, 1945-1946. Pendelbury, John. *Town and Townscape. The Life and Work of Thomas Sharp*. Available at: <http://catless.ncl.ac.uk/sharp/#> (accessed 14/03/2014).

<sup>20</sup> Sharp, op cit., p.12.

<sup>21</sup> Bonham-Carter, op cit., p. 233. A gentleman farmer, author, and historian, Bonham-Carter's prolific output included number of books about rural matters, military history, and scripts for television and radio.

<sup>22</sup> Abercrombie and Paton Watson, op cit., p.23.

Figure 2.3.



In the imagined village, an inward focus directs attention towards the social centre thereby aiding a sense of community. As seen in the cover image from Thomas Sharp's *The Anatomy of a Village*, 1946 (above), and the sketch of a typical community centre from the *Plan for Plymouth*, 1943 (below). Both illustrations use a slightly off-centre, elevated perspective view to contribute to a sense of enclosure.

Figure 2.4.



Ernesettle's shopping parade with maisonettes above, designed by Louis de Soissons, which became an important site of social interaction. Centres of communal activity such as this were thought by planners to be 'socially efficient' aiding the cultivation of community feeling, and precluding the social stagnation believed to occur in purely residential neighbourhoods.<sup>23</sup>

Photograph courtesy of PWDRO, ref. PCC/76/5/1301.

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<sup>23</sup> Abercrombie and Paton Watson, *op cit.*, pp. 85.



The creation of spaces for everyday social interaction not only made communal life visible, but, it was argued, it also made the community more robust, preventing social stagnation and fostering a healthy exchange of views. For Sharp, village life was 'no stagnant pool', but rather 'a flowing eddying widening stream that is continually refreshed by new tributaries'.<sup>24</sup> Architect/planner Professor Sir Charles Reilly, former Director of the influential Liverpool School where he taught and later mentored Abercrombie<sup>25</sup>, argued that houses 'placed in friendly relation to one another' around a green would 'make for a more intelligent community: with all the ways of meeting one's fellows such an estate would provide... a great many of the advantages of a residential university would accrue'.<sup>26</sup> The 'widening stream' of an 'intelligent community' would not, it was hoped, degenerate into the social silos of class that characterised the 19<sup>th</sup> century slums, or 20<sup>th</sup> century suburbia. Instead, like the residential university, their unity would be defined by a more enlightened sense of combined purpose.

Reilly's greens were an influential component in the neighbourhood model for post-war housing development, and their logic resurfaces in his protégé Abercrombie's vision of 'conveniently sited meeting places' and opportunities for 'mutual intercourse', in the 'socially efficient' neighbourhoods of the *Plymouth Plan*.<sup>27</sup> Village greens formed the centrepiece of all seven post-war estates in Plymouth: square in plan at Efford, Honicknowle, and Southway; and wedge-shaped in Ham, Pennycross, and Whiteleigh. Only in Ernesettle was the village green circular, a response to local topography which flags the influence of experimental American town planning (see also page 84).

Abigail Beach has argued that this sense of a connection between the built environment and emergent community had been gestating in architectural and reformist discussion since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, crystalizing in the 'idea of

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<sup>24</sup> Sharp, op cit., p.5.

<sup>25</sup> The Liverpool School of Architecture under Charles Reilly's leadership (1904-1933) established the first university department of planning, called 'civic design'. Patrick Abercrombie was a student and subsequently Lever Professor at the School. A position inaugurated by Reilly with finance from industrialist Lord Leverhulme, developer of the model village of Port Sunlight. Larkham, op cit., p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Reilly, cited in Nick Tiratsoo. "New vistas": the Labour Party, citizenship and the built environment in the 1940s'. In *The Right to Belong*, by Abigail Beach and Richard Weight (eds.): 136-156. London: I.B.Tauris, 1998, p.140.

<sup>27</sup> Tiratsoo, op cit., p.140; Abercrombie and Paton Watson, op cit., pp.78 and 85.

neighbourhood' in the period 1900 – 1950' .<sup>28</sup> The necessity of post-war reconstruction thus drew on ideas that had reached a peak of 'clarity and dominance' in the 1940s, their inclusion in the policy and design guidance producing “a new consensus for planning in Britain” in the immediate post-war years.<sup>29</sup>

### **'The Harmonious Whole' – classlessness and the imagined village**

The village vision that planners invoked was free from any sense of the frictions and resentments that were elsewhere reported to characterise the hierarchical relations of rural society. Class tensions were smoothed away by a romantic yearning for stability, order and peace in the countryside – a comfort and a relief in contrast to the turbulent recent history of disaffected labour, insolvent aristocracy, and bomb-destroyed cities. Neighbourhood planning thus proposed a counteroffensive to the spatial consolidation of class that appeared to be in progress in the suburbs.

By virtue of its natural setting and its small scale, the village was pictured as a place in which the 'natural order' of the environment was consonant with a depoliticized, socially harmonious population. Bonham-Carter's *The English Village*, for example, argued that the everyday education of the country child produced an instinctive understanding of 'what community means'.

The child has to learn, not only from the printed word, but from all that his senses can perceive in the life around him. For the country child this will be the field, hedgerow, wood, or copse: birds, flowers, trees, animals; and in the study of the locality his attention will naturally be focussed on people and their work. The country child who lives in a small community, where he knows what every building is for and what every person does as a job and how they all fit together, has a far keener awareness of what community means [...] than the child of the modern city or suburb.<sup>30</sup>

Here, the natural world of the hedgerow and wood is held in balance with that of the people and their work – an adroit reconciliation of man and nature corresponding to what Catherine Brace has called the 'middle landscapes' of inter-war ruralism.

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<sup>28</sup> Beach, 1995, op cit., p.1.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, op cit., p.5.; and A. Alexander, op cit., p.76.

<sup>30</sup> *The Land, The People and The Churches*, pamphlet published by the British Council of Churches, cited in Bonham-Carter, op cit., p.199.

These 'lightly populated and cultivated "*middle landscapes*" [were] not only topographic space[s] between city and mountains, but a middle condition in which people, work and settlements are seen to be in harmony with their surroundings.<sup>31</sup>

Dubbed 'the Armchair Countryside' by Michael Bunce, this popular literary depiction of rural life 'has done much to perpetuate the myth of the village and the countryside in general as the last remnant of a happier way of life in which all classes co-exist in tolerant harmony'.<sup>32</sup> The 'Armchair Countryside' was an imaginative construction that had little in common with the rural reality: subsequent oral histories have cast a very different complexion on the life of an English village of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, where:

when the squire or farmer came along you had to stand and raise your hat to him. Same for the vicar and schoolmaster. You had to respect everybody for what they were. [...] If you didn't – look out!'.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, the village vision had especial cultural purchase for planners in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Whilst this wilful myopia can be read as sentimental nostalgia, or worse, as a conservative desire to shore up and maintain the status quo, for its advocates the idealised village was attractive not because of the deeply hierarchical class structure that it obscured, but rather, because of what it appeared to promise.

The depoliticized social landscape of the rural imaginary provided an enchanting image in comparison to the unrest of the depression years when concentrations of urban unemployment had led to hunger marches and even riots, whilst simultaneously the burgeoning middle classes escaped en masse to the suburbs. The middle condition apparently present in the romanticised village, was therefore also a social ambition, not so much an ambition to replicate and extend a specific form of middle-classness (suburban middle-classness, for example, was much derided, see also page 97), but rather to create a new social homogeneity that would efface existing patterns of class distinction. The minister in charge of post-war housing, Aneurin Bevan captured this ambition, describing the mono-class developments of inter-war

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<sup>31</sup> Brace, op cit., p.94.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Bunce. *The Countryside Ideal*. London: Routledge, 1994, p.55.

<sup>33</sup> Stan Holmes, farm labourer's son, cited in Colin Ward. *The Child in the Country*. London: Bedford Square Press, 1988 p.30.

suburbia as 'castrated communities [...] a monstrous infliction upon the essential psychological and biological one-ness of the community'.<sup>34</sup> Instead, Bevan saw the status of everyone in the post-war neighbourhood as essentially equal, seeking to 'recapture the glory of some of the past English villages, where the small cottages of the labourers were cheek by jowl with the butcher's shop, and where the doctor could reside benignly with his patients in the same street'.<sup>35</sup>

That such a future was imminent might have been easy to imagine in the context of recent history. German bombs did not discriminate by class, and (in propaganda if not in fact) wartime spirit had generated greater sympathy and co-operation between British people of every social stripe.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century had witnessed a significant decline in the fortunes of Britain's landed aristocracy, whose wealth was assailed first by taxation in the aftermath of the Great War, and subsequently by the Wall Street Crash of 1929.<sup>37</sup> In these circumstances many commentators sincerely believed that a *New Jerusalem* was within view.

The early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had witnessed a period of radical destabilization in the traditional structures of rural land ownership and stewardship. The country estate was in decline and as the landed gentry departed there was speculation about whom or what would fill the void in their absence.<sup>38</sup> Wartime property requisition cemented and accelerated the demise of the country estate, and by the 1940s, according to David Matless, both 'celebrants and critics considered the country house doomed as a private realm'.<sup>39</sup> Whilst some critics mourned 'the tragedy of a whole social system broken down', others saw an emerging opportunity.<sup>40</sup> For Abercrombie, the decline of the aristocratic estates presented an opening, indeed an imperative,

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<sup>34</sup> Bevan, cited in Peter Thompson and Nick Tiratsoo. *England Arise! The Labour Party and Popular Politics in 1940s Britain*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995, p.103.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.104.

<sup>36</sup> Matless, *op cit.*, p.187.

<sup>37</sup> Pamela, Horn. *Country House Society: The Private Lives of England's Upper Class After the First World War*. Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2015.

<sup>38</sup> Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, 1945, and Winifred Holtby's *South Riding*, 1936, for example, deal with this theme.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.222.

<sup>40</sup> James Lees-Milne (National Trust), cited in Matless, *op cit.*, p.222.

for a 'change in personnel': 'somebody with as wide or wider area of control than the great landowners must step in – either the State or the Local Authorities'.<sup>41</sup> In place of the landed gentry, ownership of country estates often passed into the hands of the state via the acquisitions of new bodies such as the National Trust and National Parks, becoming in the process more accessible to the general public. At the same time, leisure for ordinary workers was steadily increasing as working hours fell, the combined effect of these factors bringing about radical changes in the recreational use of the countryside: 'the weekend and the automobile [...] open[ing] up rural areas around cities for casual relaxation on a large scale'.<sup>42</sup>

At an everyday level, this simultaneous transfer of property and extended mobility effected a crude democratisation of the countryside. A fact that was troubling for some commentators who lamented the invasion unruly urbanites of with their litter and noise.<sup>43</sup> With the introduction of compulsory purchase powers through the Town and Country Planning Act in 1947, local authorities gained the ability to acquire assets within (and sometimes beyond) their boundaries, and with so much rural property becoming available urban municipalities such as Plymouth, also began to take advantage of the surplus. In Ernesettle, Budshead Farm, a property with a long history of aristocratic ownership dating back to at least the 16<sup>th</sup> century, was repurposed as a youth club.<sup>44</sup> In Ham, Ham House was given to Plymouth City in 1947 and used as a branch library until the 1970s; and in Whitleigh, Whitleigh Hall was

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<sup>41</sup> Patrick Abercrombie. *Town and Country Planning*. 3rd edition, 1959. London: Oxford University Press, 1933, p.199.

<sup>42</sup> Bunce, op cit., p.122.

<sup>43</sup> Matless, op cit., p. 167.

<sup>44</sup> When the Ernesettle estate was built, a modestly sized farmhouse still stood on the site. Initially converted into two council houses, it later housed the youth club, before the conversion of the barn buildings was undertaken in the mid-50s to provide a more flexible youth club and library accommodation. The site of Budshead Farm has a long history dating back to at least the 16<sup>th</sup> century when a larger manor house provided the family seat of Sir Ferdinand Georges. It is reputed that this was also the first landing place of St Budoc in the 5<sup>th</sup> century who arrived in Devon from Brittany and, according to legend, established a monastic community on the site. Budshead Manor was demolished in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and a smaller farmhouse built in its place re-using some of the original 16<sup>th</sup> century stone. The farmhouse was demolished during the 1950s, and the barn was destroyed by fire in 1975, but parts of the manor's castellated walls and stone arches with cable ornament remain to this day. The use of the Budshead buildings for a library and youth club means that all Ernesettle residents of the 1950s, 60s and early 70s feel a proud connection to the heritage of the site. Coincidentally, the St Budoc mythology has comforting historic parallels with the settlement experience of the 1950s pioneers.

demolished and the land used for housing. Other historic buildings also found new uses with two Palmerston Forts (Agaton Fort and Woodland Fort), transformed into a social club and a youth club respectively. One oral history interviewee (M. Ward), recalling the various youth clubs in the local area observed '[it's] funny, all round Plymouth they got these houses that they call barns, then they turn them into youth clubs'.<sup>45</sup> Whilst these barn conversions broadly reflected the requisitioning of former agricultural buildings for new neighbourhood uses, they also marked the transfer of property from private to public hands. The raw statistics for this shift in the ownership of capital are imbued with a deeper meaning when considered in the light of their experiential effects on users of youth clubs and libraries across Plymouth. As later chapters show, wealth redistribution in the form of public property enabled many hundreds of people to learn skills, play sports, borrow books, and forge connections to their neighbours and the neighbourhood that had lasting effects in terms of working-class experience.

In the context of this radical reorganisation of rural land ownership and stewardship, it might have been natural for post-war planners to conclude that the village vision of middleness and class harmony was already in progress. Far from being a conservative appeal to preserve the status quo, the village was mobilised within a vision of a more egalitarian future. Whilst it is no doubt true that the imagined harmony of the village glosses over or effaces the long history of aristocratic rural rule, for post-war planners it had become a shorthand for a future society in which class tensions no longer existed – an imaginary harmonious whole where historic antagonisms were reconciled. However, emerging from the amorphous soup of 'biological community' new classes and social alignments were beginning to be articulated. A reinvigorated Britishness was invoked to replace class allegiance with a unifying national subjectivity in which the nuclear family featured as the dominant structuring sub-unit; whilst a new legion of experts battled to stake out professional territory in the organisational apparatus of a rapidly expanding state.

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<sup>45</sup> Malcolm Ward and Jacky Ward. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky, 25/04/2013.

Figure 2.5.



The departure of aristocratic land owners in the early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century produced a radical de-stabilization in traditional structures of rural land ownership and stewardship. In this context, the imagined social homogeneity conjured by planners' is more readily understood. Requisitioned buildings, once part of aristocratic estates, were transferred from private to public ownership and modified to serve new purposes. In Ernesettle, the barns, which had once served Budshead Manor, were converted into a public library and youth club. The walls to the 16<sup>th</sup> century manor house can be just be seen in the right of the top photograph. Photographs courtesy of Plymouth Local Studies Library, refs. P000080757 and P000080758.

As the role of government expanded to include the distribution of welfare, *traditional* nerve centres of working-class political pressure found their roles reconfigured within the mechanics of the welfare state (see page 43), potentially creating an 'identity vacuum'.<sup>46</sup> From this point on, argues Kristen Ross, 'national subjectivity begins to take the place of class' as a source of identification for the 'privatized and depoliticized broad middle strata'.<sup>47</sup> Ross's argument is focused on France, but in Britain, too, a similar process was underway. Traditional categories of class identification were largely absent from planning texts, in their place a symbolic nationalism in which the countryside figured as a shorthand for Britishness. Borrowing from a sense of safety and permanence that the countryside had come to represent during the blitz years, 'the countryside – unscathed, peaceful and apparently timeless – became an especial symbol of continuity'<sup>48</sup> - a cornerstone of post-war national identity. The 'nationalisation' and protection of parts of the countryside by the National Parks and National Trust both responded to and reproduced this construction of Britishness, feeding into a sense of a nation united within its landscape. To situate the reconstructed neighbourhood within a rural context (both geographically – on former agricultural land, and discursively – after the village vision) was therefore to ally the project of housing reconstruction to the same sense of universal patriotism that had cemented the collective consciousness during wartime. In Plymouth the idea of a nation united was underscored further by the naming of streets: in Ernesettle after Battle of Britain airfields (Redhill, Croydon, Kenley, Uxbridge, and Hornchurch); in Whiteleigh after garrison towns (Taunton, Aylesbury, Dorchester, and Carlisle); and Honicknowle after British writers (Burns, Byron, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Conrad). Discursively at least, Britishness replaced class as the principle pillar of identification within the post-war neighbourhood.

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<sup>46</sup> Miller and Rose, op cit.

<sup>47</sup> Ross, op cit., p.11.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Weight. "'Building a new British culture": the Arts Centre Movement, 1943-53'. In *Right to Belong*, by Richard Weight and Abigail Beach (eds.): 157-180. London: I.B. Tauris, p.72.



## Planning and Expertise

Whilst traditional divisions of class disappeared in the imaginative construction of the neighbourhood, the authors of the post-war landscape were themselves affiliates of a new technical class. Ross argues that the creation of a 'broad middle strata' was accompanied by the emergence of a new *comprador* class: 'a range of middle-men and go-betweens, new social types that dominated and profited from transformations wrought by the state'.<sup>49</sup> Social government generated new forms of expertise: new 'experts of the social' – individuals and organisations whose claims to specialist knowledge equipped them to govern in the name of social harmony.<sup>50</sup> As social government advanced through expansions in the civil service and in the remit of the local authorities, it developed a characteristic visual and linguistic style: the all-seeing aerial perspective, the declamatory polemic, and the anatomical metaphor form the rhetorical stock-in-trade of an emerging technical class.

An appeal to the scientific objectivity of survey and statistical data is typical of the staking out of truth claims in novel fields of expertise such as town planning. Abercrombie, for example, made a clear distinction between common-sense knowledge, and the enlightened insight of the planning professional:

the plain practical man might say that he knew his town from pillar to post [...] but he actually knows no more about it than his tongue does about the state of his teeth.<sup>51</sup>

In Plymouth's plan recourse to statistical data, explanatory diagrams and maps covering every aspect of urban life from workforce demographics to traffic accident hot spots provided objective 'proof' of the scientific process and beneficial outcomes of planning. The visual rhetoric of the plan was reinforced by linguistic contrasts which compare the diseased outgrowth of 'sprawl' and 'swelling' in pre-war suburbia on the one hand, with the science of reconstruction that deals in 'satellites' and 'nuclei' on the other.<sup>52</sup> This device also puts in an appearance in the 1946 Jill Craigie<sup>53</sup> film *The Way We*

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<sup>49</sup> Ross, op cit., p.8.

<sup>50</sup> Miller and Rose, op cit.

<sup>51</sup> Abercrombie, 1933, op cit.

<sup>52</sup> Abercrombie and Patern Watson, op cit., p.3.

<sup>53</sup> Jill Craigie was an English documentary film director, screenwriter, and feminist. During the making of *The Way We Live* she met and later married the Labour Party politician Michael Foot, who held the seat of Plymouth Devonport from 1945-55. Her

*Live*, a movie which dramatizes the local reception of the *Plan for Plymouth*. In one scene, Abercrombie and Paton Watson present the plan to an audience of Plymouthians using slides and animations to illustrate the conditions of the present-day city. An imaginary plan of the city's streets is transformed into a circulatory system populated by flowing cells which jostle and squash each other in the overcrowded, unhealthy streets of Plymouth's metropolitan inheritance.

As Ben Highmore has argued, to describe built space as corporeal was a productive rhetorical analogy for planners, 'a small step away from suggesting aggressive forms of surgery' to remedy urban ills'.<sup>54</sup> Such appeals to scientific authority could be used to present town planning as the inevitable outcome of a logical overview devoid of ideology, a persuasive device in the project to establish professional authority and credibility.<sup>55</sup> In post-colonial scholarship this will to power has been read as a class-based counterpart to the colonial impulse to explore, map and ultimately conquer urban territory, the production of urban legibility in the form of survey and map seen to advance the project of governance.<sup>56</sup> As Richard Alston has argued, 'transparency renders the city more open to political power'.<sup>57</sup> As Lucy Hewitt explains, the survey method, originating in the various reform movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,

reinforce[d] the complicity of planning with the tactics of governmental power and its reification of the professional and expert [...] The act of gathering quantitative, and therefore scientifically valid knowledge, and the production of a visualisation that spatialized that knowledge was fundamentally connected to the extension of control over the unruly complexity of urban social life.<sup>58</sup>

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films reflected her political principles and covered topics such as child refugees, working conditions for miners, and gender equality. *The Way We Live* can be read as an imagined vision of post-war social democracy in action (see also chapter 3).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.4.

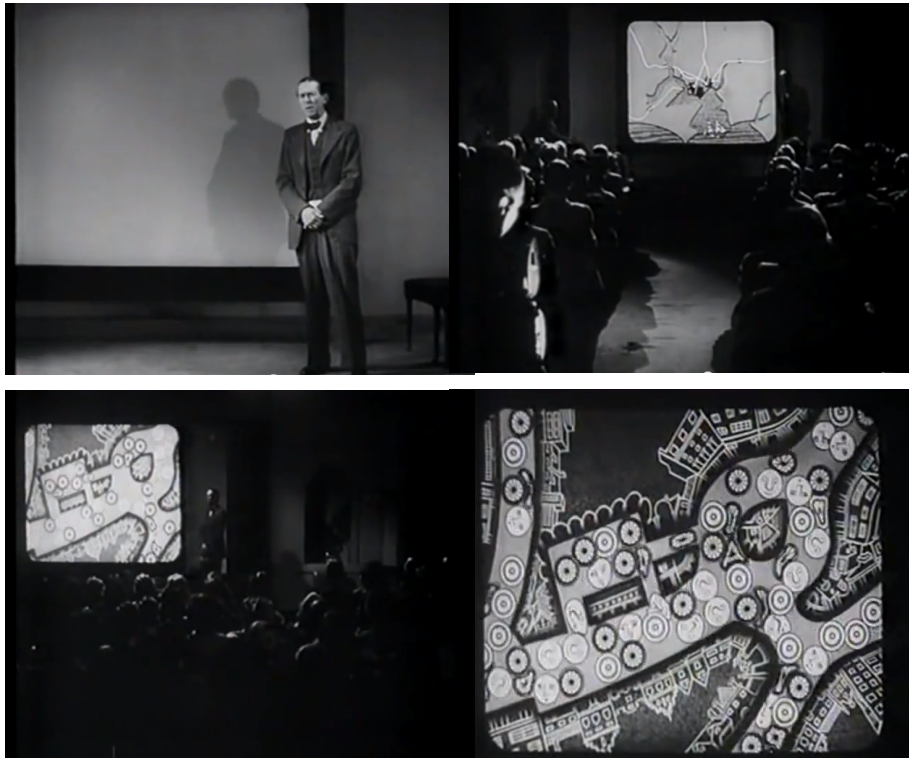
<sup>55</sup> Matless, op cit.p. 26.

<sup>56</sup> Noah Hysler-Rubin. *Patrick Geddes and Town Planning, a critical view*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2011.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Alston. 'Class cities: Classics, utopianism and urban planning in early twentieth-century Britain'. *Journal of Historical Geography*. No. 38 (2012): 263-272, p.270.

<sup>58</sup> Lucy E. Hewitt. 'The Civic Survey of Greater London: social mapping, planners and urban space in the early twentieth century'. *Journal of Historical Geography*, no. 38 (2012): 247-262 pp.250 and 262.

Figure 2.6.



Stills from the film, *The Way We Live*, Jill Cragie, 1946. Patrick Abercrombie presents the plan to an audience of Plymothians. Here, the city's pre-war streets are transformed into a circulatory system populated by unhappy cells which jostle and squash each other. Abercrombie pictures a Plymouth plagued by 'overcrowding, breeding areas for illness, crime, and an increasing C3 population'. The corporeal analogy was a productive rhetorical trick used to justify 'aggressive forms of surgery'.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Highmore, op cit. p.4.

Implicit in these texts is an argument that the form of government advanced through planning is necessarily malign or oppressive. Whilst the critique may be valid in respect of colonial conquest, the ambitions of post-war planners must be viewed within the specific context of mid-century democracy. Although the expansion of 20<sup>th</sup> century town planning proceeded hand-in-hand with a corresponding expansion in government, this government had a fresh target in its sights. The *subject* of social government of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century was not only 'unruly social life', but also the unruly free market.

The modern planning technique which emphatically expressed this will to control was zoning. Demonstrating the planner's mastery over both landscape and economies, zoning, through the enforced containment and separation of the different functions, aimed to create more humane environments by managing land uses and moderating the power of the market. It is particularly evident in Plymouth's city centre, where new districts were formed for the containment of shopping, industry, and civic business, but the post-war estates themselves also confined *dwelling* to its proper place beyond the central commercial zone. Through their geographic separation, new neighbourhoods re-focussed attention on the domestic realm, protecting it from dilution with an encircling green belt. Within these dedicated 'dwelling zones' a reinvigorated domesticity could be brought into focus that reconfigured identity around the family unit, and elaborated new spatial territories oriented by gender.

### **'Where fathers have a little time' – Greenbelt, family and gender**

Within the imagined village, families were to form the structural building blocks of social organisation. For this aspect of the post-war vision an American exemplar of neighbourhood planning was invoked that had in fact developed through a transatlantic exchange of planning ideas originating with Ebenezer Howard's Garden City.<sup>60</sup> Named in honour of one of Howard's inventions, Greenbelt USA came into being as part of a programme of Keynesian economic stimuli initiated by Roosevelt during the Great Depression. Developed under the aegis of the Regional Planning Association of America

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<sup>60</sup> Stanley Buder. *Visionaries and Planners. The Garden City Movement and the Modern Community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

(RPAA)<sup>61</sup> (a collective that included conservationist Benton MacKaye, urban critic Lewis Mumford, architect/planners Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, and housing reformer Catherine Bauer), Greenbelt, Maryland,<sup>62</sup> refigured the garden city as a suburban new town on the outskirts of Washington DC.<sup>63</sup> The design of Greenbelt was influenced by a combination of garden city, Radburn<sup>64</sup> and Neighbourhood Unit planning ideas, 'but also by the distinctive qualities of the site: the topography, soil and climate; the regional character of the population, local customs and regulations, and politics'.<sup>65</sup> Here, the American planners offered an alternative mode of town layout to the formal geometry that predominated in British design schools:

the essential shape of the Greenbelt town plan was indicated by nature. Here, as in many other great plans, the planner's job was to discover, not invent... The planners of Greenbelt revealed the potentialities of the great curved plateau as a beautiful place for good living.<sup>66</sup>

For the RPAA, responsiveness to local conditions signalled a harmony between man and nature, a proto-environmentalism that was ahead of its time in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As figurehead Lewis Mumford explained, 'the condition to be aimed at [is] namely one of equilibrium'.<sup>67</sup> Abercrombie and Paton Watson's *Plan for Plymouth* referred to this stateside precedent,

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<sup>61</sup> Founded in 1918 by architect Clarence Stein and planner Henry Wright, the RPAA asserted a natural ecological order as the basis for structuring a new type of urban society. Conservationist and co-operative principles combined with a belief that superior technology and cleaner sources of power could address the failures of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century urbanism with its slum areas, industrial pollution, and private profits.

<sup>62</sup> Conceived as a self-sufficient community, the construction of Greenbelt was initiated by the federal government to provide jobs during an era of high unemployment. Once complete, the town was managed as a cooperative, with a citizens' committee to run the commercial centre, but by the 1950s this form of civic independence had become the subject of political suspicion. Several members of Greenbelt's coops appeared before Congressional subcommittees on charges of communism as part of the McCarthy investigations. Now protected as a Historic District, the area is formally recognised as an asset for its architectural and utopian ambition. Wikipedia. *Greenbelt Historic District*. n.d. Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenbelt\\_Historic\\_District](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenbelt_Historic_District) (accessed 01/07/2015).

<sup>63</sup> Buder, op cit.

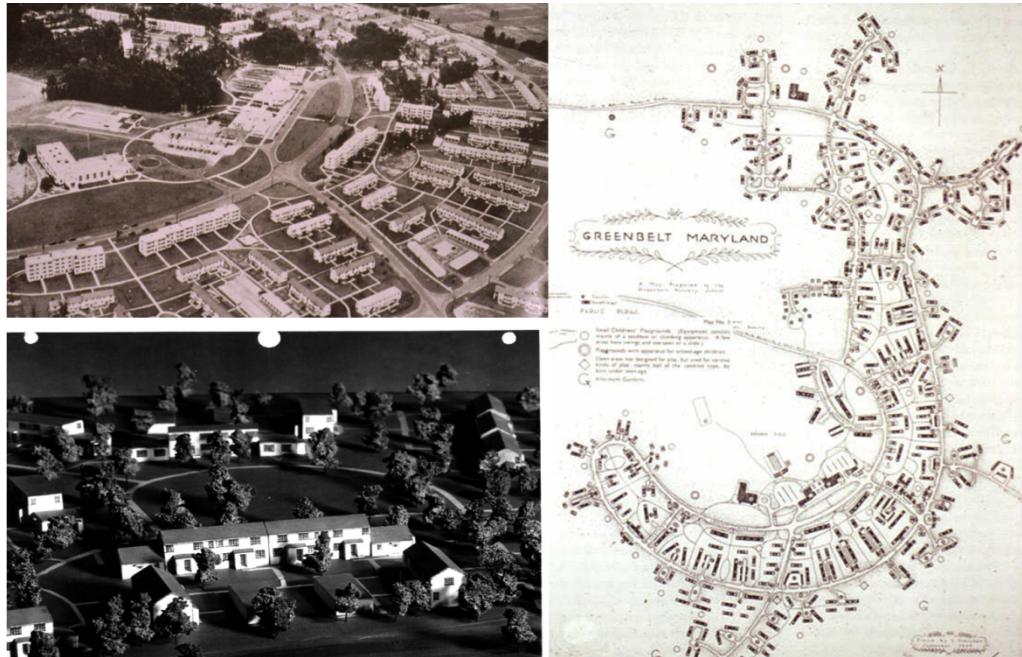
<sup>64</sup> Radburn, 'a town for the motor age', was design by Stein and Wright in 1929 to separate motor and pedestrian traffic. As car ownership in Britain increased in the 1950s and 60s, it became an influential model for neighbourhood planning, although its application was subsequently criticised for its illegibility.

<sup>65</sup> Clarence Stein. *Towards new towns for America*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1966, p.123.

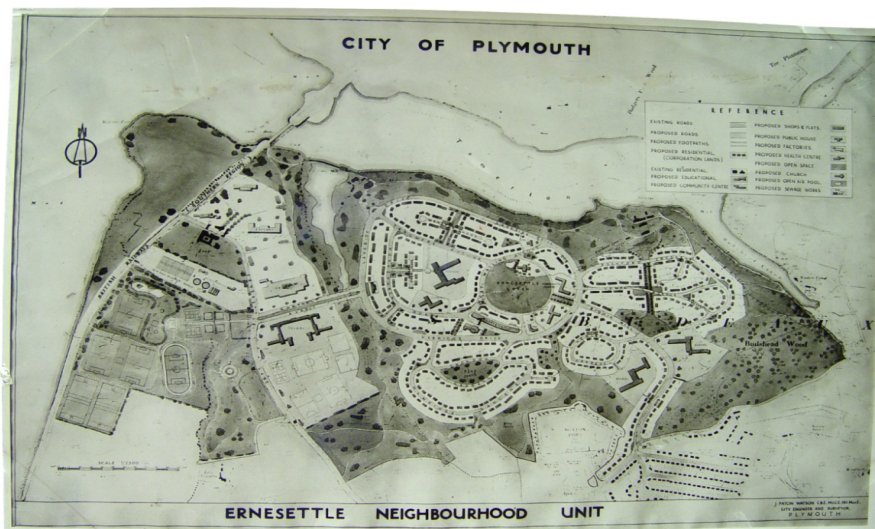
<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p.127.

<sup>67</sup> Mumford, cited in Abercrombie and Paton Watson, op cit., p.4.

Figure 2.7.



The design of Greenbelt signalled a harmony between man and nature, its shape determined 'by the distinctive qualities of the site: the topography, soil and climate'.<sup>68</sup> It was designed to produce 'a decent kind of life', where 'fathers have a little time for watching our kids and playing'.<sup>69</sup> Similarities with the Ernesettle Neighbourhood Unit (below) were not confined to qualities of form and spatial arrangement. Ernesettle, too, was designed to promote family living and the rearing of healthy, well-adjusted children.



Top: Greenbelt images sourced at <https://www.studyblue.com/notes/note/n/4-3-modern-era/deck/888104>. Below: Ernesettle Neighbourhood Unit plan courtesy of Plymouth and West Devon Records Office, ref. PCC/76/5/1290.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>69</sup> *The City*. Directed by Ralph Steiner, narrated by Lewis Mumford. 1939.

welcoming the opportunity to apply 'the latest thought in seemly community design' by shaping new neighbourhoods 'with only nature's contours and vegetation as pre-determinants'.<sup>70</sup> The execution of this ambition by Paton Watson's engineering department can be seen clearly in plans for of the neighbourhoods (e.g. Ernesettle plan, figure 2.5), as well as in the siting of boundaries, greens, and other features in response to local topography, with 'schools built on hilltops where the ground was flattest for playgrounds and sports fields, and houses built along the contours around them'.<sup>71</sup>

Beyond questions of spatial layout, Greenbelt, Maryland, offered other lessons in 'good living'; lessons which had received international attention in design circles via the 1939 film *The City*. Narrated by Lewis Mumford, and conceived by housing reformer and RPAA contemporary Catherine Bauer for the 'City of Tomorrow' exhibit at the 1939 New York World's Fair, the film is an explicit polemic, contrasting the noisy, dangerous daily life of New York with the fresh air and domesticity of Greenbelt. In part one *The City* depicts the dangerous, socially uneven, and dehumanising effects of urban modernity: its traffic accidents, its slums, its merry-go-round of production and consumption, frayed nerves, and conflict. The film captures the crowded streets of the city, the squalor of its slums, and the danger of children playing on railways and amongst traffic. The daily routine of work is inter-cut with shots of mechanised mass-production, of taxi clocks, and parking meters measuring time and cost. As part one closes an urban soundscape morphs into a confusing cacophony, whilst Mumford poses the question: 'there must be something better. Why can't we have it?'.<sup>72</sup>

By contrast, in part two of *The City*, Greenbelt is offered as a return to the America of early settlement. A town which 'works as well for modern living as once it did in old New England towns'.<sup>73</sup> First and foremost, this is a family environment: children of various ages are seen at play, and parents engage in domestic occupations: cooking, gardening, and child-rearing. Greenbelt is presented as a place which produces 'a decent kind of life', where 'fathers have a little time for watching our kids and playing', and where 'science serves

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p.5.

<sup>71</sup> Gould, op cit.

<sup>72</sup> *The City*, op cit.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

the worker' in pleasant factories and light industries.<sup>74</sup> As a model of settlement, Greenbelt primarily focused on the benefits of domestic life, drawing lessons from what Mumford elsewhere called 'woman's special contribution to the new urban complex [with an emphasis on] the needs of child-bearing and child-rearing'.<sup>75</sup> Greenbelt assumed a place for women as mothers (indeed, initially married women residents were banned from working), and for men as workers. Thus, home was constructed as a space of feminine labour and male leisure: 'a retreat for men to return to'.<sup>76</sup> This binary construction would have consequences for feminine mobility, however, as Janice Winship argues, though this may appear oppressive to modern eyes, mid-century culture viewed gender equality in different terms than to today. Feminist demands of the era, she argues were informed by a belief in 'complementarity between wife and husband' in which genders were 'different but equal'.<sup>77</sup>

The domestic reforms that women campaigned for on this basis are examined on page 114, their increasing influence on policy demonstrating the significant gains made by women as a result of the universal franchise. In this context, Mumford's interest in planning for family life reflected an increasing reappraisal of the importance of the domestic in the civic whole. In Britain, as well as in the USA, there was a 'growing public interest in the internal workings of domestic life as suitable material for public and national reflection'.<sup>78</sup> From Mrs Miniver, *The Times*' popular fictional columnist of the 1930s, to Marjory Spring Rice's widely read *Working Class Wives*, Alison Light argues that the 1930s witnessed the elevation of 'the domestication of the British to the status of national character'.<sup>79</sup> As domestic life was illuminated by the beam of the cultural spotlight, so too were family roles, especially that of motherhood. This was evident in wartime social commentary that had expressed anxiety about the effect on family life of disruption resulting from mobilisation and evacuation, with prurient media

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<sup>74</sup> Lewis Mumford. *The Culture of Cities*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1938.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p.216.

<sup>76</sup> Roberts, *op cit.*, p.105.

<sup>77</sup> Janice Winship. *Inside Women's Magazines*. London: Pandora Press, 1987, p.36.

<sup>78</sup> Light, *op cit.*, p.137.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p.146.



attention focussing on feminine morality.<sup>80</sup> More attention was also drawn to motherhood as new psychological theories crossed the Atlantic which 'replaced regimented theories of child-rearing', stressing instead the importance of the mother in early childhood, 'defence of the rights of children, and [an] emphasis on affectionate care and personal interaction'.<sup>81</sup>

The foregrounding of the experience of childhood in *The City* is illustrative of its crucial importance within a vision of the post-war neighbourhood. By providing safe environments and good homes, post-war planners sought to foster the optimum conditions for rearing well-adjusted children – children who, as young people and adults, could be relied upon to protect and care for those same homes and neighbourhoods. This preoccupation with healthy child development and free-ranging play has a counterpart in British children's literature of the period, forming what Owain Jones describes as a major theme in rural writing, characterised by the close association between the innocence of nature, and the notion of children themselves being innocent. Such popular series as Enid Blyton's the *Famous Five* (book one published 1942), or Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* (first published in 1930), emphasised childhood freedoms and companionship within a 'harmonious environment which supports this happy state'.<sup>82</sup> These texts also produced models of juvenile citizenship, portraying childhood adventures of a 'wholesome, educative and marvellously enterprising variety', which would build children who were 'paragons of sturdy independence, always busy and cooperative little bees'.<sup>83</sup> As subsequent sections will show, this powerful literary and cultural message was an effective component in the shaping of social behaviour, contributing towards adult attitudes to childhood independence that are, by today's standards, surprisingly relaxed.

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<sup>80</sup> Geoffrey, G. Field. *Blood Sweat and Toil. Remaking the British Working Class 1939-1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>81</sup> Sheila Rowbotham. *A Century of Women. The History of Women in Britain and the United States*. 1999. London: Penguin, 1997, p.248.

<sup>82</sup> Owain Jones. 'Little figures, big shadows. Country childhood stories'. In *Contested countryside cultures.*, by Paul Cloke and Jo Little (eds.): 158-179. London: Routledge, 1997, p. 164.

<sup>83</sup> Light, op cit., p.125.

As exemplified by Greenbelt, USA, the rearing of citizen children combined both social and environmental factors. A stable home with mother at its centre sat within a neighbourhood in which children were free to roam, where, boys and girls achieve a balanced personality, ready to build and meet a many-sided world. Facing the good and bad, choosing the best.<sup>84</sup>

Greenbelt's 'paragons of sturdy independence' found their filmic antiheroes in the delinquents of *The Way We Live* who provided a portent of what could go wrong if lessons of environmental inadequacy were ignored. As the narrator in Jill Cragie's film visits the inter-war council estate of Efford he happens upon a vandalised street sign – a shorthand for youth disaffection and delinquency – pondering,

now who'd want to break up a signpost? Rather a nice one too...<sup>85</sup>

The persistence of fears over delinquency following the construction of Plymouth's estates, is confirmed by an address to all residents in the Plymouth Corporation tenant's handbook by the Housing Estates Manager, R. Greenhalgh, who highlighted 'one important matter to which I must draw your attention, and that is wilful damage by children or youths on the housing estates'. Warning that 'wanton destruction cannot be tolerated', Greenhalgh urged that 'tenants should do all they can to prevent this damage occurring'.<sup>86</sup> Delinquent behaviour was a key problem for the visionaries of a classless future. With its causal logic no longer explicable in terms of class disaffection or poverty (apparently *cured* by welfare), its origins were presumed to be psychological or environmental – the result of bad mothering or lack of space to play.

In the new family zones of Plymouth's post-war estates, one way of enhancing children's liberty was by the regulation of vehicular traffic. Motor cars were pictured as being the primary enemy of children, *The Way We Live*, quoted a statistic that found 'more children are killed on the road each year than died in all the years of the blitz'.<sup>87</sup> Whilst a lower level of car ownership in the UK meant that there was (at the time) no need to adopt Radburn design

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<sup>84</sup> *The City*, op cit., 28 minutes.

<sup>85</sup> *The Way We Live*. Directed by Jill Cragie. 1946, 17 minutes.

<sup>86</sup> Plymouth Corporation. *Your House Your Home*. Plymouth: Underhill Ltd., c.1950, p.9.

<sup>87</sup> *The Way We Live*. 35 minutes.

principles. The separation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, nevertheless, informed the *Plan for Plymouth's* proposals across the city. A dedicated new 'parkway' channelled fast motor transport through and around the city, and the residential population were decanted from the congested centre to the safety of peripheral neighbourhoods. Here, as in Greenbelt, attention was re-focused on a daily life of domesticity, effectively dividing access to the life of the city centre along gendered lines. This urban reorganisation created distinct functional geographies: with leisure shopping, civic administration, and organised culture at the core; and domestic life, community culture, subsistence shopping, and light industry on the periphery.

### **'A co-coordinating and sobering effect' – architecture and equality**

As the Second World War came to a close, architects, planners, and policy makers saw in housing reconstruction the potential for reshaping everyday life for democratic ends, advancing social equality through material improvements in living conditions. Like the neighbourhoods in which they were arranged, the houses of post-war reconstruction were designed to underscore the sense of social homogeneity that planners hoped to engender in communities. Uniform facades contained well planned, well equipped interiors, bringing modern technology and efficiency to the home to improve family health and happiness, and free up leisure time for the masses. In these optimum conditions, an active citizenship would flourish, training tenants in the domestic disciplines that served to constitute a healthy, orderly, and self-reliant community.

This connection to citizenship made housing a matter of national importance and of national pride, with the estates of the 1940s and 50s, in particular, setting new standards for living in terms of space, equipment, and local amenity which have never been exceeded. The scale and significance of this ambition was proudly articulated in the policy documents which set out housing standards. The Dudley Report of 1944 applauded the 'school of modern domestic architecture which can hold its own with the work of any other country' and should be regarded as 'a national asset'.<sup>88</sup> It recommended that all local authorities employ a trained architect, and urged them to replace the inter-war

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<sup>88</sup> Ministry of Health, op cit., p.10.

objective of creating 'unobtrusive' estates, with the more ambitious aspiration 'of adding positively to the beauties of the town and countryside'.<sup>89</sup> The accompanying *Housing Manual* elaborated on this theme, suggesting that council estates should be national exemplars, setting 'a good standard for the country' not only in accommodation and construction, 'but also to questions of arrangement, taste, and harmony with their surroundings'.<sup>90</sup> This sentiment was echoed by Abercrombie in the *Plan for Plymouth*, who argued that '[i]n addition to the presentation of art in public galleries, it should be possible to incorporate art in the design and decoration of the home'.<sup>91</sup>

Dudley Report guidelines were translated in Ernesettle into four house types: Easiform semi-detacheds; Cornish Unit houses and maisonettes; Traditional terraces; and de Soissons corner houses (also semis). All are two-storeys high with private gardens front and back, and can be seen on other *Plymouth Plan* estates. Architects employed directly by Plymouth Corporation reworked the municipal housing of the inter-war years to create the Traditional terrace a repeatable design comprising four houses with rear access for the central pair via a covered passageway. Prominent buildings were commissioned from private practice, the regional office of Louis de Soissons (architect of Welwyn Garden City), being appointed to design pairs of corner houses: modest statement buildings which articulate road and pedestrian junctions – a unique feature to Plymouth's post-war estates.<sup>92</sup> De Soissons' practice was also commissioned to design schools, pubs, and shops for the Plymouth estates, including a small amount of housing incidental to these facilities such as maisonettes above shops, and landlord's accommodation above pubs.

Labour and materials shortages meant that other house types employed modern systems of rapid construction: the Easiform house, developed by the building firm John Laing & Co. Ltd, was built in concrete using a cast-in situ method which it was claimed, could produce a house a week; and the Cornish Unit, by Selleck Nicholls, St Austell, was a panel and post system, in which each panel was designed to be equivalent to several courses of brick yet light

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p.10.

<sup>90</sup> *Housing Manual 1944*. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1944, p.9.

<sup>91</sup> Abercrombie and Paton Watson, op cit. p.87.

<sup>92</sup> Plymouth Corporation, Minutes of the Housing Committee, 1944-1957. Ref. 2834/109-11326/06/1945: minute 2609; and Gould, op cit.

enough to be lifted into place by a single labourer.<sup>93</sup> Whilst prefabrication provided a pragmatic solution to the exigencies of the post-war period, the aesthetic qualities of these mass-produced buildings – sobriety, harmony, and orderliness – mirrored the imagined temperament of the post-war citizen. Architectural forms which seemed suggestive of these qualities were lauded whilst others, particularly those associated with the expression of individual status or private profit were dismissed.

Modern building technology appeared to offer an especially productive resonance with the democratizing potential of post-war citizenship. Arnold Whittick's 1947 publication, *The Small House of Today and Tomorrow*,

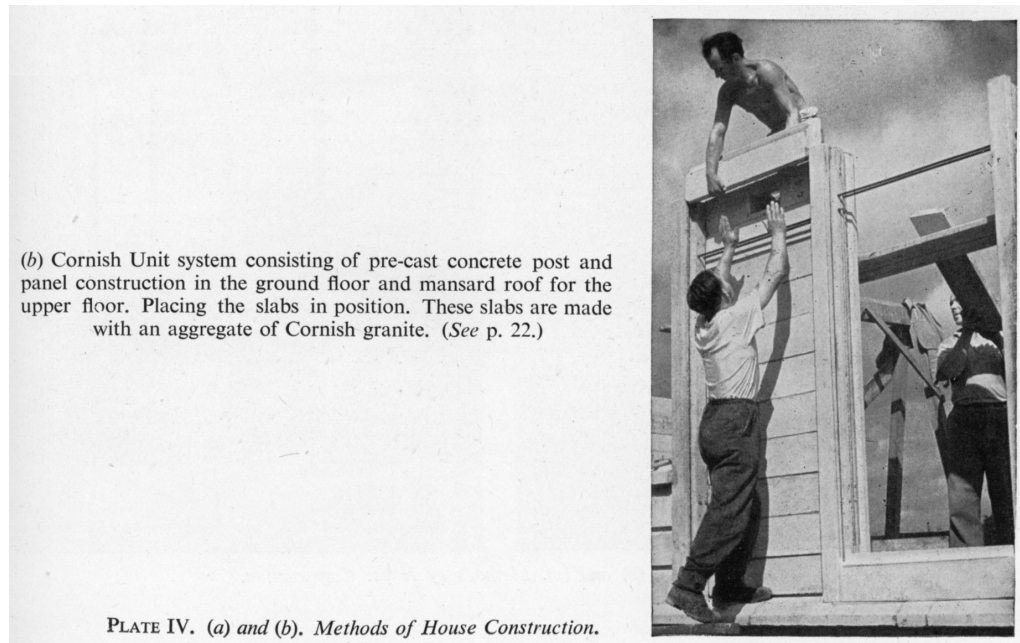
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<sup>93</sup> The adoption of modern building technologies of pre-fabrication and rapid construction also provided a solution to the immediate post-war constraints of labour and material supply. Labour-saving building methods were vital to the revival of a construction industry depleted by forces call-ups. A situation which led, in Plymouth, to the importation of labour from Ireland and Liverpool, as well as the use of prisoner of war labour from camps in Ivybridge and St Budeaux. Plymouth Corporation, Minutes of the Housing Committee, op cit., minutes: 28/05/45, 2284; 26/06/45, 2615; 15/02/46, 1082; and 14/05/46, 2370. In anticipation of this problem, Plymouth's Housing Committee had appraised a number of house types between 1944 and 1946 which 'could be produced speedily and in large quantities' including 'Stonecrete', Easiform, 'Braithwaite', 'Howard', Orlit, British Iron and Steel Foundation (BISF), and Cornish Unit houses.

In Plymouth the labour problem was so acute that prisoner of war labour was used to build roads and sewers on the new estates. Five-hundred and thirteen were thus employed in January 1946. Local historian Brian Moseley records that the captured German airmen 'were known locally as "Herrenvolk" which is a translation of "The Master Race", which was probably applied sarcastically rather than with any respect'. Brian Moseley, 1993, p.99. The use of prisoner of war labour at Ernesettle is likely to have been limited to the pre-fabricated dwellings on Ernesettle Lane, rather than the main estate itself. Whilst most were repatriated during 1946, nevertheless, this measure gives an indication of the urgency of the labour problem which further contextualises the value of pre-fabricated building systems. Plymouth Corporation, Minutes of the Housing Committee, op cit., minute 15/01/1946, 1082.

In undertaking this investigation, local government followed the lead established by the Ministry of Works and Building Research Station during the inter-war and war years when the construction of 83 prototype houses had been licensed for testing and evaluation. The most promising of these methods were published in its series of Post-War Building Studies, reports that are the precursor to modern Building Regulations – minimum standards of building quality in terms of strength and stability, thermal and sound insulation, fire protection, maintenance and durability. Arnold Whittick. *The Small House: Today and Tomorrow*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: Leonard Hill, 1947; England Interdepartmental Committee on House Construction. *House Construction (Post-War Building Studies no. 1*. London: HMSO, 1944; England Interdepartmental Committee on House Construction. *House Construction (Post-War Building Studies no. 23*. London: HMSO, 1946; and England Interdepartmental Committee on House Construction. *House Construction (Post-War Building Studies no. 25*. London: HMSO, 1948.

Figure 2.8.



Modern methods of construction were essential to the rapid delivery of housing in the context of post-war labour and materials shortages. Prefabrication provided a pragmatic solution to these exigencies, and, furthermore, the aesthetic qualities of these mass-produced buildings – sobriety, harmony, orderliness – mirrored the imagined temperament of the post-war citizen.

Above, Cornish Units under construction illustrated in Arnold Whittick's *Small House Today and Tomorrow*, 1947. Below, Cornish Unit houses and maisonettes on Hornchurch Road, Ernesettle, c. 1953. Photograph courtesy of PWDRO, ref. 1704/3/1/1-43.





Another modern method of construction was found in the Laing *Easiform* house, whose concrete walls were cast in situ. Pairs of semi-detached homes with slate-hung bay windows shared some similarities in size and form with their speculatively built cousins, but the language of council estate architecture was intentionally restrained, evoking a sense of collective coherence rather than individuality.

Laing *Easiform* houses on Uxbridge Drive, Ernesettle, c. 1952.  
Photograph courtesy of PWDRO, ref. PCC/76/5/1295

looked forward to the 'not very remote prospect of a complete house being made in a factory and delivered to site by helicopter!' Proclaiming that '[t]he repetition of standardized parts, and the use of identical materials in different buildings, will have the same sort of co-coordinating and sobering effect on the aspect of our towns as uniformity of modern attire has in social life'.<sup>94</sup> Amongst the illustrations contained in *The Small House*, the Cornish Unit itself featured as an exemplar of the happy correlation of efficient construction and democratic appearance.

A democratic appearance might arise from mass-production, but it could also be the result of architectural intent. Alongside the 'sobering uniformity' of pre-fabrication, the designers of post-war housing looked to sources of architectural inspiration that evoked a sense of collective coherence. Neo-Georgian, already a popular reference point for inter-war municipal design, was favoured thanks to its 'wide repertoire of linking elements, such as long horizontal roof lines, string courses and plinths' that served to create compositional unity.<sup>95</sup> With its historical origins in the Enlightenment, Georgian also seemed to stand for a progressive social and scientific attitude. Called upon to symbolize a 'balance of personal freedom and collective order', it offered an alternative to the discredited urban redevelopment programmes initiated under authoritarian leadership in Germany and Russia.<sup>96</sup> As Stephen Ward has argued, Britain's wartime accolade as the longest serving combatant against Nazism had given it 'a critical role, more moral than material, in demonstrating [...] the long-term viability of democracy in Europe', and in this role, Britain advanced urban planning as the response of 'modern social democracy against both the long-standing evils of the city, and the more immediate evils of Nazism'.<sup>97</sup>

Abercrombie was a keen advocate, urging Plymouth to 'recapture the wonderful continuity of the street scene obtained by Nash and Wood the younger, as in Old Regent Street and Bath, but in a modern idiom'; as was

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<sup>94</sup> Whittick, op cit., pp.10-11.

<sup>95</sup> Oliver, et al., op cit., p.113.

<sup>96</sup> David Jeremiah. *Architecture and Design for the Family in Britain, 1900-70*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p.150.

<sup>97</sup> Stephen V. Ward. *Planning the Twentieth Century City. The Advanced Capitalist World*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2002, p.167.



Louis de Soissons who lamented the fact that 'the influx of German ideas and the gothic revival in the later Victorian era had cut off the development of the Georgian style'.<sup>98</sup> Neo-Georgian features, like those prototyped during the inter-war years at Welwyn, re-emerged in the architectural articulation of Ernesettle road junctions, strengthening the unity of the public realm, and symbolically underscoring the value of communal amenity.

### **'Individualism must be subordinated' – the suburb and the citizen**

Communal amenity had been distinctly lacking in the private housing developments of the preceding years. Characterised by ribbons of housing following existing infrastructure, homes built for private sale rarely included common green space or shared facilities. Planning texts employed a polemical rhetoric to illustrate the advantages of common ownership, setting it in opposition to the counter-example of the speculatively built private suburb. With the self-conscious individualism of its one-of-a-kind housing, speculative suburbia served as the antithesis of post-war communitarian ambition, its dwellings and its inhabitants becoming a foil for the imagined harmony and homogeneity of post-war society.

Whilst 'the desire to express the idea of community conditioned many aspects of the form of the council suburb', speculative builders employed an architectural vocabulary that announced individual distinction and demarcated private territory in mock historical styles which came to be known by the shorthand 'Tudorbethan'.<sup>99</sup> Often designed by small-scale builders, the suburban semi's decorative assortment of half-timbering, leaded windows, sunrise motifs, gables, and dormers, could be assembled and reassembled to justify the marketing strap line 'every house unique', even if, behind the façade, properties were identical. As Oliver, Davis, and Bentley have argued, this resulted in the divergence of private and municipal housing design in the inter-war years into 'two quite different – ultimately antagonistic streams': with council housing built on the model of architect Raymond Unwin's modest neo-Georgian aesthetic, and speculative semis a flamboyant carnival of styles and decorative effects.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Abercrombie and Paton Watson, op cit., p. 77; and De Soissons, Maurice. 1988. *Welwyn Garden City : a town designed for healthy living*, Cambridge: Publications for Companies, p.48.

<sup>99</sup> Oliver et al., op cit., p.110.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p.109.

Figure 2.9.



Designed to articulate junctions and entrances, Louis de Soissons corner houses feature as *gateposts* to Ernesettle's Lakeside and Biggin Hill Schools, and are sited at the crossroads leading from the periphery to the centre of the estate. Above, corner houses on the junction of Lakeside Drive and Tangmere Avenue, Ernesettle, c. 1952. Note the two front doors to this pair of semi-detached houses, the division between each dwelling's private domain is not immediately obvious – an architectural antidote to the 'every house different' ornamentation of the inter-war semi. Photograph courtesy of PWDRO, ref. 1704/2/1.



Like the de Soissons semis, *Traditional* houses by the City Architect also featured gables ends to articulate corners and junctions. A modification of inter-war council housing, the houses were constructed in short terraces of four dwellings, their uniformity strengthening the unity of the public realm, and symbolically underscoring the value of communal amenity.

*Traditional* terraced houses on Tangmere Avenue, Ernesettle with views towards Ernesettle Creek, c. 1953. Photograph courtesy of PWDRO, ref. PCC/76/5/1303.

The extravagant application of architectural ornament offended educated tastes, but more importantly, it was the petit-bourgeois desire to express distinction and demarcate private territory that was at odds with the democratising ambitions of the post-war planners. Architectural individualism was linked both to the pursuit of private profits, and to the visual articulation of social superiority. For a post-war project that aspired to the creation of a harmonious classless society, this would not do. Reconstruction texts were explicit in their condemnation of the suburban aesthetic. According to *When We Build Again*, for example, published by the Bourneville Village Trust in 1941, the decorative concoctions of speculative suburbia did not 'represent intrinsic merit, but are ostentatious additions that serve merely to justify higher rents and also to satisfy the desire of the individual to live in a superior looking house'.<sup>101</sup>

The association between suburban property and individual gratification arose as much from the lifestyles that attached to it, as from the fact of home ownership in itself. In literary texts, critical attention centred on the social lives and leisure choices of inter-war suburbanites who, it was argued, were the victims of a superficial culture of passive entertainment and competitive consumerism. The young clerks and housewives who breathed 'synthetic air' in John Betjeman's poetic annihilation of *Slough* (1937), for example, spent their time in 'bogus-Tudor bars [...talking] of sport and makes of cars'. Their wives in 'labour-saving homes' used the time recovered from housework to manufacture their appearance: nail-varnished and peroxidized, their 'tinned minds' unable to distinguish 'the birdsong from the radio'. Women were often the prime targets of such critical attention. Being the chief consumers in the home, they were deemed to take an unhealthy interest in consumerism, employing goods as a marker of social superiority rather than for any practical purpose. Architect Thomas Sharp's *English Panorama*, for example, pictured the suburban housewife as especially acquisitive and susceptible to the whims of fashion:

She has a sense of property and a desire to display it ... that is far more highly developed than his, she is at once more conservative and more open to the appeal of small novelty: aesthetically she has few or none of the makings of a citizen.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> *When We Build Again*. Bourneville Village Trust. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1941. p.39.

<sup>102</sup> Sharp, cited in Sugg Ryan, op cit., p.231.

This 'sense of property', apparently corresponding with a hunger for distinction, was incompatible with post-war citizenship and its goal of social homogeneity. Cast as an outdated attitude, it was an individualistic inclination that many commentators believed the war effort had overturned. J.B. Priestley, for example (whose *Postscript* Sunday evening broadcasts attracted 16 million listeners at their peak and are credited with aiding the Labour landslide victory of 1945), observed, in 1941, the 'huge collective effort' was 'compelling us to change not only our ordinary, social and economic habits, but also our habits of thought'. The British population were, he argued, 'actually changing over from the property view to the sense of community'.<sup>103</sup> The *Plan for Plymouth*, made a similar case, again, in relation to property ownership, arguing for land nationalisation on the basis that '[e]xperience in the war has exemplified the fact that when the cause of the community is at stake, individualism must be subordinated'.<sup>104</sup>

As Susanne Cowan has argued, Abercrombie was not alone in mobilising the idea of wartime spirit to substantiate calls for the nationalisation of land. Town Planning professionals repeatedly 'internalised and propagandized the "myth of the Blitz", [...] conjuring memories of communal shelters and neighbourly assistance as a model for the type of selfless citizenship that should carry over into the peacetime policies of social welfare'.<sup>105</sup> Whilst planners' polemic helped to advance their project, the romanticised communality of wartime and vilified individualism of suburban home-ownership misrepresented the reality of these experiences. Just as a blindspot in planning discourse obscured the unpalatable evidence of wartime crime, looting, and black-marketeering<sup>106</sup>; the discursive double of the phantom blitz spirit – the selfish suburbanite – proved to be equally mythical. Though suburbia's critics viewed its architectural articulation of social status in terms of competitive individualism, for many of those who had purchased Tudorbethan houses during the inter-war years,

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<sup>103</sup> J.B. Priestley, *Postscript* broadcast 21/07/1941, cited in Richard Weight. *Patriots*. London: Pan, 2002, p85.

<sup>104</sup> Abercrombie, and Paton Watson, op cit., p.28.

<sup>105</sup> Susanne Cowan. 'The People's Peace: The Myth of Wartime Unity and Public Consent for Town Planning'. In *The Blitz and Its Legacy. Wartime Destruction to Post-war Reconstruction.*, by Mark Clapson and Peter Larkham (eds.), 73-85. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013, pp.73 and 77.

<sup>106</sup> For an introduction to the neglected history of self-interest in wartime see Todd Gray's work on wartime Britain. Todd Gray. *Looting in Wartime Britain*. Exeter: The Mint Press, 2009.

homeownership signalled something quite different. For them, the acquisition of a 'Dunroamin' (as Oliver et al. christened the suburban semi), was not a competitive compulsion, but rather, as the name implied, it indicated of the end of an itinerant existence conditioned by poverty. Freed from the rules, regulations and unpredictable whims of the private landlord, inter-war home ownership delivered security and autonomy.

A large proportion of inter-war suburbanites were new entrants into the middle classes, their ascension of the social ladder aided by an expanding service economy that opened up new white-collar job opportunities. Property ownership was, as Savage et al. have noted, a way of securing a foothold:

new middle-class groups – especially those whose status within the middle-classes was marginal – saw owner-occupation as a reinforcement of their class position.<sup>107</sup>

On a practical level, home ownership meant more control over the domestic environment. Unhampered by the physical limitations of space or landlord regulations, suburbanites could make their mark through decoration, gardening, and home care. As Gary Cross puts it, suburbia was the 'logical culmination of common aspirations of industrial peoples for autonomous space and time'.<sup>108</sup> An investment in home and associated consumer goods could be especially meaningful for those whose social position was, in former times, most precarious, allowing them to 'demonstrate their arrival by the adoption of a lifestyle which separated them from the respectable poverty from which they had risen'.<sup>109</sup>

### **'Britons of the future' – health, race, pronatalism, and the ideal family**

This self-conscious expression of distinction was at odds with the social harmony that post-war planners sought. Encoded into the very architecture of post-war homes, homogeneity of social classes was also to be achieved at the level of individual bodies. Measured according to a 19<sup>th</sup> century system

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<sup>107</sup> Mike Savage, James Barlow, Peter Dickens, and Tony Fielding. *Property, Bureaucracy and Culture: Middle-class Formation in Contemporary Britain*. London: Routledge, 1992, p.82.

<sup>108</sup> Gary, Cross. 'The Suburban Weekend: Perspectives on a Vanishing Twentieth Century Dream'. In *Visions of Suburbia*, by Roger Silverstone (ed.), edited by Roger Silverstone, 108-131. London: Routledge, 1997, p.108.

<sup>109</sup> Burnett, op cit., p.251.

for the classification of human physical condition, post-war housing sought to eliminate the C3 human. Concerned by the detrimental physical and social effects of urban overcrowding, housing density, dwelling size, and domestic equipment were all informed by a vision of the future national population that was fitter, stronger, and better behaved. Alarm over a declining birth rate boosted planners' argument that the Britons of the future could only be raised in homes that were spacious, well equipped, and inhabited by model families of white ethnic stock.

Concerns about population health and national continuity put housing at the intersection of policy with both conservative and socialist appeal. As historian Geoffrey Field has observed, this was reflected in a 'noteworthy change' in the language surrounding family welfare during the war years. In place of the accusatory tone of earlier moral panics, there emerged 'a language that emphasized equal citizenship and social justice and focused more heavily on past iniquities and the warping effects of class division'.<sup>110</sup> Cast in an 'increasingly environmentalist' light, social reforms began to focus not just on demographic outcomes, but on 'the urgent need to improve housing, health care, and reduce the poverty in which so many children were being raised'.<sup>111</sup> Urban overcrowding was a key cause for concern. Believed to cause poor health and degraded physical condition, an interest in overcrowding and its consequences originated in 19<sup>th</sup> century surveys and classifications of the urban poor. Ostensibly a measure of physical capacity, these categories, which sorted the population into grades (A1 to C3) were based on physical fitness, and mapped closely onto class. First used in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as measure of fitness for grading British Army recruits, the tenacity of the A1-C3 grading system is evinced by a scene in *The Way We Live*, in which Abercrombie, explaining the necessity of urban re-planning, states that pre-war Plymouth was plagued by 'overcrowding, breeding areas for illness, crime, and an increasing C3 population'.<sup>112</sup> His claim extrapolates from the findings of a 1933 survey which reported Plymouth's overcrowding to be

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<sup>110</sup> Field, op cit., p.215.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p.213.

<sup>112</sup> *The Way We Live*, op cit., 36 minutes

amongst the worst in the country, with 25% of working-class dwellings failing to meet minimum space standards.<sup>113</sup>

The 'C3 problem' was reinvigorated by the parallel issue of population decline identified during the Second World War. Alarm over low national fertility had a long history, with roots dating back to the racist and social Darwinist doctrines of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century eugenics movement. But pronatalism hit the mainstream during the war years, prompted by out-of-date census data which appeared to signal an impending population contraction. Low birth rate statistics activated the pertinent wartime concern for the future 'fighting strength' of the nation, fuelling William Beveridge in a speech following the publication of the Beveridge Report, to cast the post-war housing agenda in explicitly pro-natalist, pro-nationalist terms:

It is important [...] that those who design homes today should realize that they must be birthplaces of the Britons of the future – of more Britons than are being born today. If the British race is to continue then there must be many families of four or five children.<sup>114</sup>

The Plymouth Housing Allocation Matrix Table ensured that at least in the immediate post-war years priority went to larger, overcrowded families with additional points awarded for each child as well as for elderly dependents. Amongst my oral history sample medium-large families were indeed typical, with most households including three or more children. Every Plymouth estate seems to have had its super-sized families: in Ernesettle it was the Luscombes, whose household of 13 (11 children, two parents) were squeezed into a four bedroom house in Kenley Gardens. In neighbouring Honicknowle, the Stacey family, numbering 18 in total, outgrew a single house and occupied a pair of adjacent semis. However, these exceptional cases should not be taken as evidence that pronatalist policies were unquestioningly followed. As we shall see, even within Ernesettle there were wide variations in family size, and studies elsewhere have shown that working-class women did not always welcome the suggestion that they should produce more offspring. As Field

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<sup>113</sup> The official definition of an overcrowded dwelling was based on the number of persons per room exceeding two, and on a lack of separate sleeping arrangements for 'persons of the opposite sex over ten years of age and not living together as man and wife'. *When We Build Again*, op cit.; and Plymouth Corporation, op cit.

<sup>114</sup> Beveridge, cited in Roberts, op cit., p. 45.



has stated, women were well aware of the compromises such a choice would entail in the form of increased domestic burden and greater financial strain, and '[f]or many having a small family went with their aspirations for a better life, social mobility, and being modern, while numerous offspring was seen as proof of irresponsibility, lack of control, a sign of being lower class, and not quite respectable'.<sup>115</sup> Family size was a matter for private negotiation, and moreover, until the advent of widely available pharmaceutical contraception, it was also a matter of chance.

The belief that post-war Britain was poised on the verge of a population crisis combined with other wartime panics (much inflated by gossip) over youth delinquency, female immorality, and child neglect in the absence of called-up husbands and fathers. Such panics were coloured by class prejudice, and by the unspoken understanding that the solution to the problem of repopulation on any reasonable scale could only be provided by the working classes, who represented three-quarters of the nation.<sup>116</sup> Shortly after the war, alternative sources of population increase were considered, but these revealed another, darker dimension to post-war social engineering: its racial horizon. A 1949 report titled *Immigration and Emigration* produced by the Royal Commission on Population pondered the possibility of encouraging inward migration, finding that:

Immigration on a large scale into a fully established society like ours could only be welcomed without reserve if the immigrants were of good human stock and were not prevented by their religion or race from intermarrying with the host population and becoming merged in it.<sup>117</sup>

The Royal Commission concluded that because the only large migrant populations likely to seek residency in Britain at the time were from the Commonwealth, 'continuous large scale immigration would probably be impractical and would certainly be undesirable'.<sup>118</sup> Thus, pronatalism focused British social reform efforts on 'native' white ethnic stock in an attempt to maintain and extend Western values, culture and ethnicity.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Field, op cit., p.215.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Royal Commission on Population, cited in Gordon Hughes and Gail Lewis. *Unsettling Welfare: the Reconstruction of Social Policy*. London: Routledge, 1998, p.18.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p.18.

<sup>119</sup> Field, op cit.

Figure 2.10.

<b>Housing Allocation Matrix Table</b>	<b>Points</b>
1. Each Son and Daughter, unmarried living with parents	3
2. Badly overcrowded and slightly overcrowded families	Up to 6
3. Tuberculosis confirmed by Medical Officer of Health's Dept. Each person affected	9
4. Other relevant diseases or disabilities on Medical Certificate (Each person affected)	3 to 6
5. Service Civil Defence Man's widow with family	3
6. Widow/widower, or spinster with family	3
7. Payment of excessive rent in relation to income	Up to 3
8. Accommodation in bad state of repair	3
9. Husband serving in H.M. Forces	2
10. Ex-Service Men or directed war worker, or ex-directed war worker	2
11. Totally disabled Ex-Service man or woman	9
12. Registered partially disabled Ex-Service man or woman	Up to 6
13. Registered totally disabled man or woman	9
14. Registered partially disabled man or woman	Up to 6
15. Married people without a separate home	3
16. Home lost by enemy action	6
17. Expectant mothers	3
18. Other factors at discretion of the Committee	Up to 9

Using this matrix, Plymouth Corporation allocated housing to those in need according to a system which prioritised larger, overcrowded families, the sick and disabled, and those who had served in the forces. Source, Plymouth Corporation Housing Committee Minutes, 20/09/1946 Special Meeting, minute. 4003.

As a result, when Commonwealth immigrants began to arrive in Britain in large numbers in the 1950s and 60s, they were not offered equal access to housing or other welfare provisions. For many years local authority housing departments were permitted to enforce barriers to immigrant residency, whilst immigrants themselves 'were frequently ignorant of the rules and their own entitlements'.<sup>120</sup> The national trend was reflected in Ernesettle, where only one black family was known to reside during the period of study.

The homogenous population envisioned by post-war planners was then, racially white. The political imperative of population increase was also to be based on heterosexual marriage – considered to be the most stable setting for raising well-adjusted children. As Field documents, '[c]hildren were increasingly described as the nation's most precious resource [...] but like any investment they could turn out badly'.<sup>121</sup> In this respect, the role of mothers became key – as primary care-givers, mothers were seen as preparing a vital path for their offspring's citizenship, and attention focused on their role in guiding the moral and behavioural development of the child. A good mother stood to make all the difference between the happy well-adjusted citizen-child, and the future social menace.<sup>122</sup> Children and families feature frequently in the visual rhetoric that was employed in planning texts to make this case. Images of dirty-faced urchins sitting in the gutter, contrasted with angelic children playing in municipal gardens, were a favourite of the pro-reconstruction polemic. A plate from Gilbert and Elizabeth McAllister's 1945 'practical plan for Britain', titled *Homes Towns and Countryside*, provides a flavour of these arguments, capturing the combined concerns of family welfare, national continuity, and population fitness and health.<sup>123</sup> On the left, the environmental disadvantages of the overcrowded urban centre are conveyed by a pair of confined toddlers who overlook the cheek-by-jowl flats, dusty street, and crammed classroom, with mournful expressions. By contrast, their counterparts on the right, mature unconstrained in sunny, tree-lined spaces, are destined for a rounded education in the bucolic surrounds of the modern village college.

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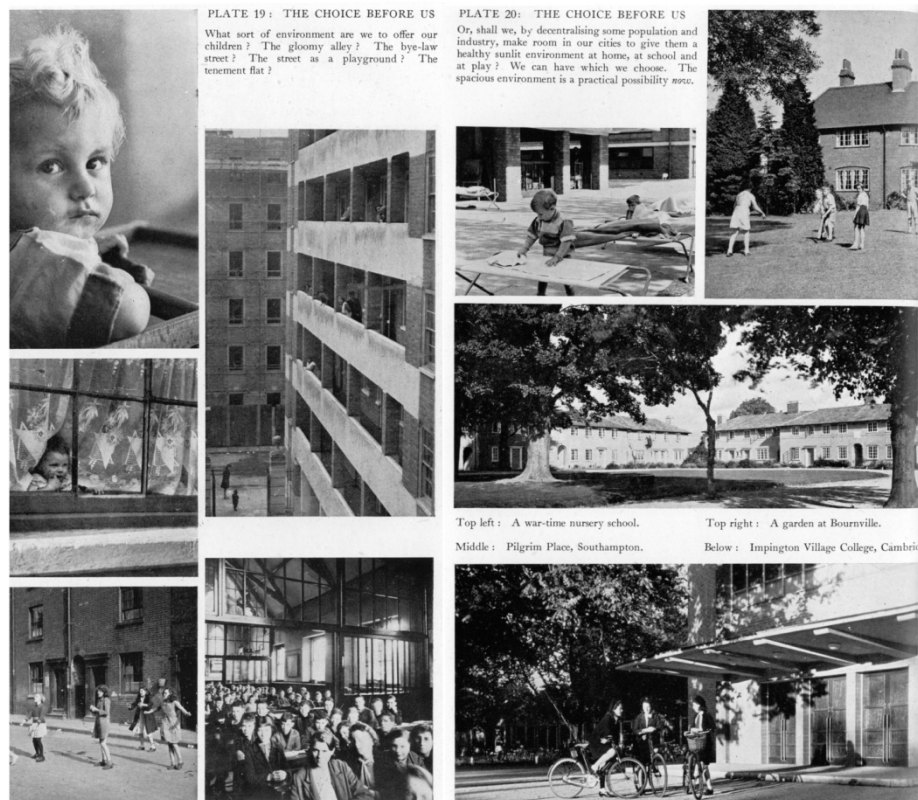
<sup>120</sup> Ravetz, op cit., p.130.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p.184.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p.194.

<sup>123</sup> McAlister and McAllister, op cit.

Figure 2.11.



The visual polemic of the planning text contrasted scruffy urchins with paragons of sturdy independence. 'Children were the nation's most precious resource but like any investment they could turn out badly' if deprived of the environments that would allow them to flourish.<sup>124</sup> Plate from Gilbert & Elizabeth McAllister's *Homes Towns and Countryside*, 1945.

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<sup>124</sup> Field, *op cit.*, p.184.

Family concerns informed the debate amongst planning professionals over the most favoured dwelling type. Flats were felt to produce conditions not conducive to child rearing, or worse, to conjugal privacy, with some lobbyists arguing that flats were little more than 'birth control barracks'.<sup>125</sup> And furthermore, high density dwelling was deemed to be unhealthy; Abercrombie recommending a reduction in housing densities for Plymouth from the 253 persons per acre recorded in one central district, to just 12 persons per acre on the new outlying estates. The Dudley Report repeated these low density ambitions, concluding: '[o]ur evidence shows that flats are unpopular with large sections of the community, particularly families with children'.<sup>126</sup> In making its recommendation that 'local authorities should continue in general to concentrate on the provision of three-bedroom houses interspersed with a proportion of other types', the Dudley Committee not only reflected the prevailing current of professional opinion, but also the popular voice.<sup>127</sup> In a speech delivered at the RIBA in 1936, entitled 'Rehousing from the Slumdweller's Point of View', housing campaigner Elizabeth Denby reported that 'flats are intensely unpopular among working people, who consider that they provide an environment which is entirely unsuitable for family life', a sentiment which was echoed by contributors to the Dudley evidence base.<sup>128</sup>

### **'Examine the Plans!' – housing design and democratic participation**

Domestic design was not simply the esoteric concern of architectural professionals, indeed, its potential as a subject for democratic engagement was reflected in its representation as a hot topic of public discussion. In print and in film housing needs were imagined to have the power to active citizenship, mobilizing women and young people to demand their rights to decent living conditions. Such coverage both reflected and inspired a groundswell of democratic engagement that was materialized through grass roots contributions to the 1944 Dudley Report (more on this later in the chapter).

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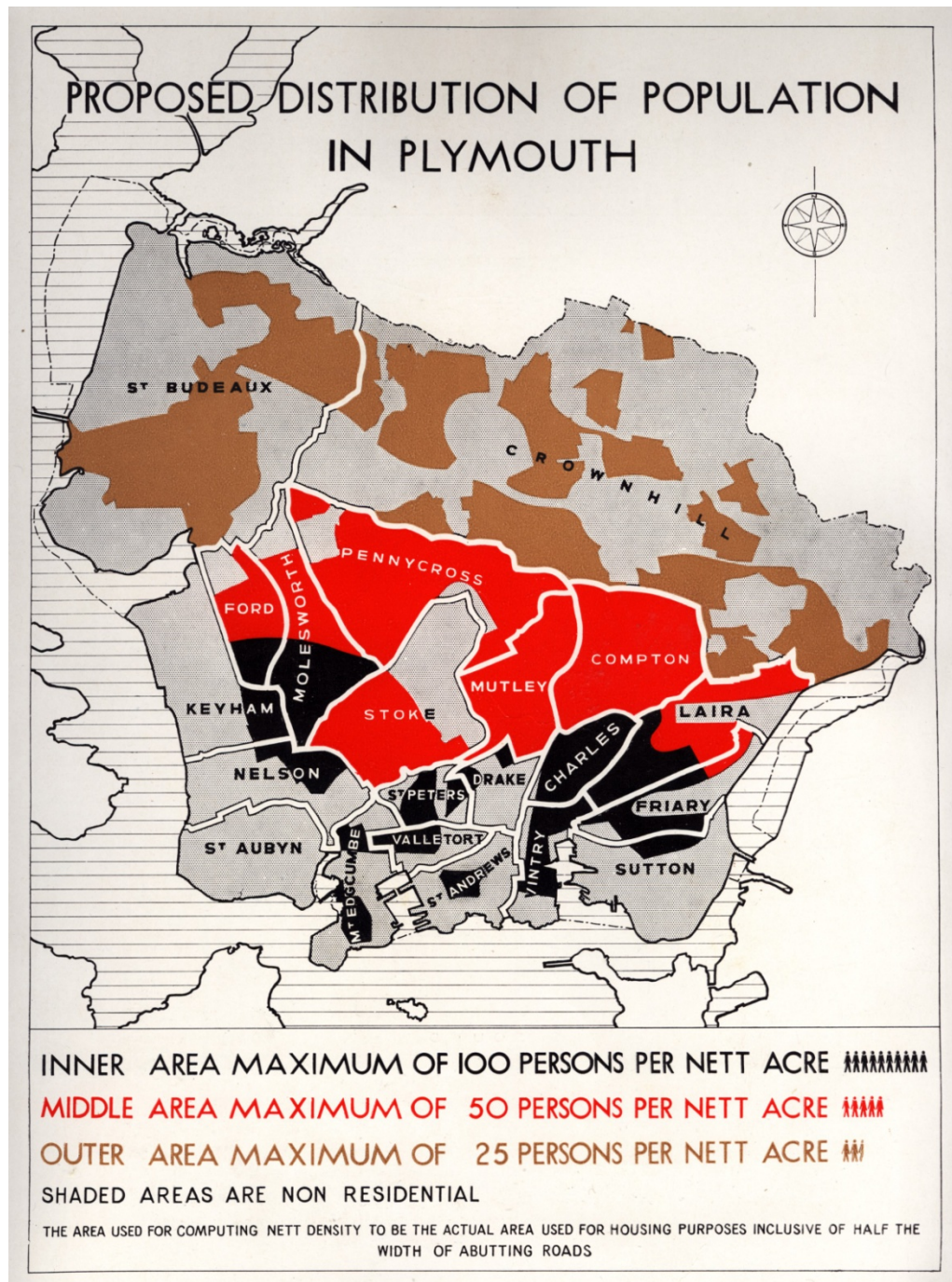
<sup>125</sup> Elizabeth McAllister, cited in Matless, op cit.

<sup>126</sup> Ministry of Health, op cit., p.12.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>128</sup> Denby, cited in Darling, op cit., p.131.

Figure 2.12.



The decentralisation of population proposed in the *Plan for Plymouth* would reduce pre-war residential densities of up to 253 persons recorded in the city centre, to 25 persons per acre in the new estates. Illustration from *Plan for Plymouth*, 1943, p.39.

A reduction in housing density sought to address overlapping concerns of family welfare, national continuity, and population fitness and health. Overcrowding in the urban centre was believed to contribute towards 'the C3 problem' of poor physical condition amongst the working classes, whilst the provision of generous houses set in private gardens was believed to promote breeding and child-rearing.

Many of these media sought to activate in their audiences the will to participate in the shaping of the post-war environment. A wartime special edition of the *Picture Post* titled 'The Land of Britain', enjoined its readers to give up the 'showy swindles' of suburbia in favour of 'sensibly designed and honestly built houses that are not architecturally despicable', posing the question 'Britons love their country well enough to die for it: do we love it well enough to prevent its being destroyed for profit?'<sup>129</sup> The *Daily Mail's Book of Post War Homes*, published in 1944, carried the rousing words of King George V: 'the foundations of the nation's glory are set in the homes of the people', on a cover which depicted uniformed men and women looking with interest at cottage homes and their contents within.<sup>130</sup> This book, 'based on the ideas and opinions of the women of Britain' compiled by housing expert, Mrs M. Pleydell-Bouverie, dedicated a full chapter to showing 'how your own and public opinion can help towards the shaping of plans for the future'.<sup>131</sup> With exhortations to 'Talk About Houses', 'Read Housing News', 'Study the Models' and 'Examine the Plans', Pleydell-Bouverie spurred her female readers into making their influence felt through group discussion, women's committees, and local government.<sup>132</sup> Advertisers too responded to this climate of feminine opinion-forming: the British Electrical Development Association, the Maple Furniture company, even the wallpaper industry, all promising to be 'at [the reader's] service' after the war.<sup>133</sup>

At a local level too, housing was a pertinent issue: the visible legacy of blitz destruction and urgent need to rebuild a fact of everyday life in Plymouth. Archive records document substantial local interest in pre-fabricated houses displayed in Swilly in 1945, and in 1946 at an exhibition of Easiform Houses at Blandford Road, Efford, which attracted 4,000 visitors.<sup>134</sup> The Jill Cragie film *The Way We Live*, which broke local box office records on its release in 1946, reproduced and inflated this popular interest.<sup>135</sup> An idealistic imagining of the

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<sup>129</sup> Editorial, 'Britons Love their country'. *The Picture Post*. 3 January 1942, 16-17.

<sup>130</sup> M. Pleydell-Bouverie. *Daily Mail Book of Post War Homes*. London: Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition Department, 1944.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.9 and 115.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 117-115.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1,5, and 6.

<sup>134</sup> Sarah Easen. *BFI Online*. British Film Institute. Available at: <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/582163/> (accessed 31/12/ 2014); and Plymouth Corporation, Minutes of the Housing Committee, op cit., minute 3530.

<sup>135</sup> Easen, op cit.

democratic inclinations of young Plymouthians, the film, which was staged and scripted but starred a cast of genuine locals, is fixated with the workings of representative democracy. From dinner table discussion, to mothers' meeting, to soap box rally, to council chamber debate, to protest march, *The Way We Live* presents democratic engagement at every scale, offering a vision of the future in which an informed public weigh up their options and demand their rights. Its closing scene imagines a mass petition for the amenities of the *Plan for Plymouth* by an organised, regimented, politically energized youth movement who march the streets demanding with songs and hand-crafted banners 'Pools for Schools', 'Theatres', and 'Less Monotony'!<sup>136</sup>

The rallying rhetoric of the media echoed and in turn amplified what Gillian Scott has labelled an 'unprecedented level of influence' of popular opinion, particularly from the women's movement, on post-war housing and social policy.<sup>137</sup> This was especially evident in the 1944 Dudley Report and its accompanying housing manual, documents which proudly acknowledged their debt to the 'housewife's or "consumer" point of view', a perspective that 'should always be in the minds of those concerned in the design of dwelling'.<sup>138</sup> Also known by its full title: *Design of Dwellings. The Report of the Design of Dwellings Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee*, the Dudley Report was perhaps government's most sophisticated effort to date in responding to public opinion as it pertained to everyday domestic life. A 75 page paper providing 'recommendations as to the design, planning, layout, standards, and construction and equipment of dwellings for people throughout the country', the report set out the findings of a sub-committee formed in March 1942 to investigate standards in working-class housing.<sup>139</sup> Its committee comprised of 20 individuals, including politicians, civil servants, four architects (one of whom was Louis de Soissons), representatives from construction and civil engineering (amongst them the developer John Laing), and an MP. Eight of its members (including its Secretary), were women, two of them representing the predominantly working-class constituency of the Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG). In the preparation of the report the committee had consulted 75 organisations

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<sup>136</sup> *The Way We Live*, op cit.

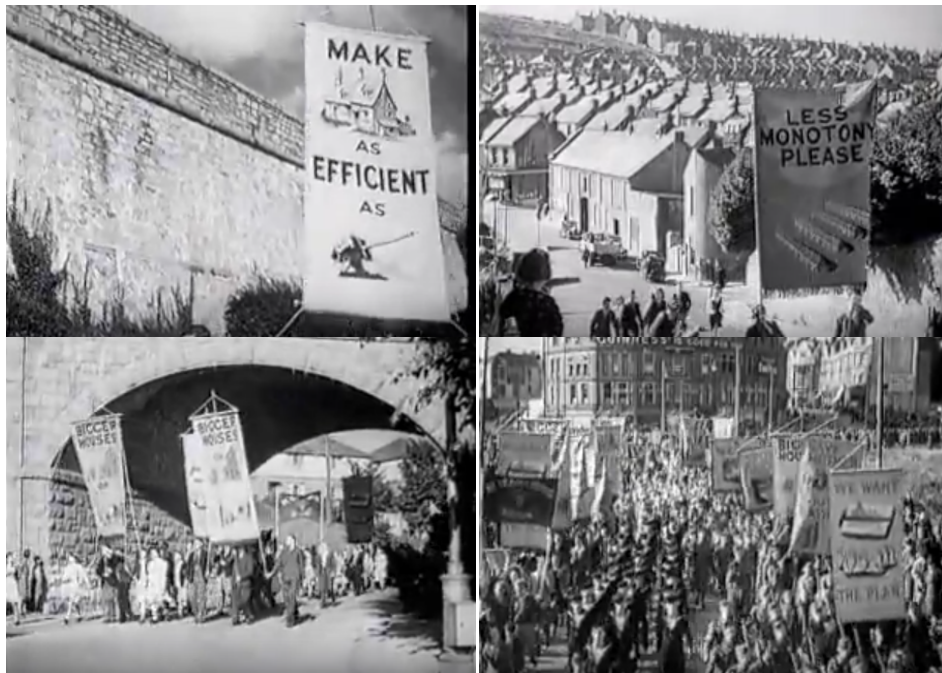
<sup>137</sup> Scott, op cit., p.165.

<sup>138</sup> Ministry of Health, op cit., p.8.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p.8.



Figure 2.13.



Stills from the film, *The Way We Live*, Jill Cragie, 1946. In this closing scene the city's youth take to the streets in a peaceful and regimented march to demand the amenities of the Plan. Popular democracy depicted as orderly, co-ordinated, and youthful.

including local government associations, commercial, professional and voluntary bodies, 15 of which were women's interest groups.

Via the WCG over 2,500 members were canvassed for their views on housing and encouraged to 'state in emphatic and clear terms precisely what type of houses they require, and insist on getting them'.<sup>140</sup> Alongside these questionnaires, the Standing Joint Committee of Working Women's (SJCWW) organisations (of which the WCG was a member) submitted various reports compiled as a result of conferences organised for women to discuss their post-war housing needs. The resulting Dudley Report proposals were surprisingly sensitive to women's everyday lives, bringing about 'a new set of entitlements for the housewife' that reflected 'not simply a "top-down" application of more enlightened social policies [but moreover] "bottom-up" pressure from an array of women's organisations, particularly those of the working class movement'.<sup>141</sup>

### **'Freedom from drudgery' – the Taylorised interior and family 'production'**

In their representations to the Dudley Committee, women demanded a modernised home. A labour-saving domestic interior would increase the efficiency of housewifery, releasing women from drudgery to devote more time to the improvement of their families and themselves. This form of domestic emancipation appealed across the political and class spectrum, apparently serving the conservative ends of nation-building by advancing family health, whilst delivering significant material improvements in working-class daily life that had a parallel in the recently-won worker rights of organised labour. 'Happy, healthy families', argued the WCG, were not a private indulgence but a 'national asset', so it was a 'national responsibility' to ensure that the 'workshop from which they come is [the] best that modern development can produce'.<sup>142</sup> Women, as 'the guardians of family health', must be better equipped to perform this vital role, urged the *Daily Mail*.<sup>143</sup> Middle and working-class voices alike found common ground in the assertion of the

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<sup>140</sup> *Co-operative News*, 12/09/1942, cited in Scott, op cit., p.172.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p.165.

<sup>142</sup> WCG, *Town Planning and the Ideal Home*, cited in Scott, op cit., p.173.

<sup>143</sup> Pleydell-Bouverie, op cit., p.60.

national importance of domestic labour, and it is perhaps this broad salience that gave the case for labour-saving homes so much purchase within the Dudley reforms. With the decline of domestic service, middle-class housewives were increasingly reliant on their own effort rather than that of a paid maid-of-work, and, as a result, housework began to be recast as a socially desirable occupation.

Whilst conservative advocates of domestic modernity sought to appeal to the sympathies of nation-builders, working-class discourse borrowed from the language of organised labour to build an argument in favour of housewife's rights. Submissions to the Dudley Committee on behalf of working-class women emphatically insisted that domestic conditions must be modernised to make housewifery easier and more efficient. Languages and techniques employed in the industrial workplace were applied to domestic labour to argue that women deserved comparable rights to regulated working hours as those won through union representation by their male contemporaries in paid employment. Indeed, the WCG, as Gillian Scott has shown, was especially keen to draw discursive parallels between housewifery and paid labour. In its publication *Town Planning and the Ideal Home*, adopted at its 1941 congress, the WGC asserted the housewife's entitlement to a decent working environment. Home was equivalent to a 'workshop or factory where family comfort is manufacture', yet the home-maker enjoyed none of the concessions then being sought by organised labour: she did not benefit from an eight hour day, could not strike, or look forward to promotion or higher pay.<sup>144</sup> In their quest for domestic modernity, women claimed, not just comparable workplace rights to men, but also, and perhaps more importantly, an equal right to leisure.

A domestic corollary to workplace productivity could be achieved by introducing management methods developed in the industrial economy into the home, bringing time and motion efficiencies to bear on domestic operations. Marjory Spring Rice in *Working Class Wives* had lamented that 'modern methods of scientific management and the rationalisation of labour had passed over the housewife, leaving her to carry out her work in the most primitive way, never specialising or learning real skill in her numerous

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<sup>144</sup> WCG, *Town Planning and the Ideal Home*, cited in Scott, op cit., p.173.

tasks'.<sup>145</sup> Housing reformers sought to correct this oversight, with the kitchen a favourite focus of operational efficiencies. In a famous study quoted by Elizabeth Denby it was reported that a cook took 281 steps to bake a cake, but this could be reduced to 45 simply by re-planning the kitchen.<sup>146</sup> In their representation to the Dudley committee the SJCWW organisations argued for the replacement of old-fashioned sculleries with decent kitchens, 'arranged for convenience in work'.<sup>147</sup> Arnold Whittick's *The Small House of Today and Tomorrow*, attempted to illustrate this in diagrammatic form: planning the modern kitchen to facilitate a 'natural flow of efficient operations': raw materials – food, pass through this productive environment and emerge as final output – meals.<sup>148</sup>

The Dudley Report responded to popular opinion with a number of recommendations to make homes more efficient and easier to clean, proposing well-lit passages and staircases; ladders that were hygienically and conveniently located; well-planned and well-equipped kitchens with roomy sinks, adequate draining boards, plate racks, tiled walls; and upstairs bathrooms with separate lavatories. As Scott observes:

These practical details serve as a reminder that the Guildswomen who represented the SJC [WW] on the Dudley Committee, Mrs Cook and Mrs Gooch, were well qualified to speak for housewives in general and working-class housewives in particular. Furthermore, they are likely to have been among the small minority of committee members with first-hand experience of cleaning a kitchen'.<sup>149</sup>

Domestic efficiency also appealed to a wider constituency. The 1944 *Daily Mail Book of Post-War Homes* reported the preferences of their readership for 'flush doors – ledges and panels mean more work', and urged that 'old type banisters should be banished' in favour of plywood panelling – 'it certainly saves labour'.<sup>150</sup> An advert for Ascot appliances on the inside cover captured the transition to which both middle and working-class women alike aspired.

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<sup>145</sup> Margery Spring Rice. *Working-Class Wives*. London: Virago, 1939, p.15.

<sup>146</sup> Jules Lubbock. *The Tyranny of Taste. The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain 1550-1960*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, p.316.

<sup>147</sup> SJCWW, 'Design of Post-war Houses', cited in Scott, op cit., p.174.

<sup>148</sup> Whittick, op cit.

<sup>149</sup> Scott, op cit., p.176.

<sup>150</sup> Pleydell-Bouverie, op cit., pp.44 and 52.

Figure 2.14.

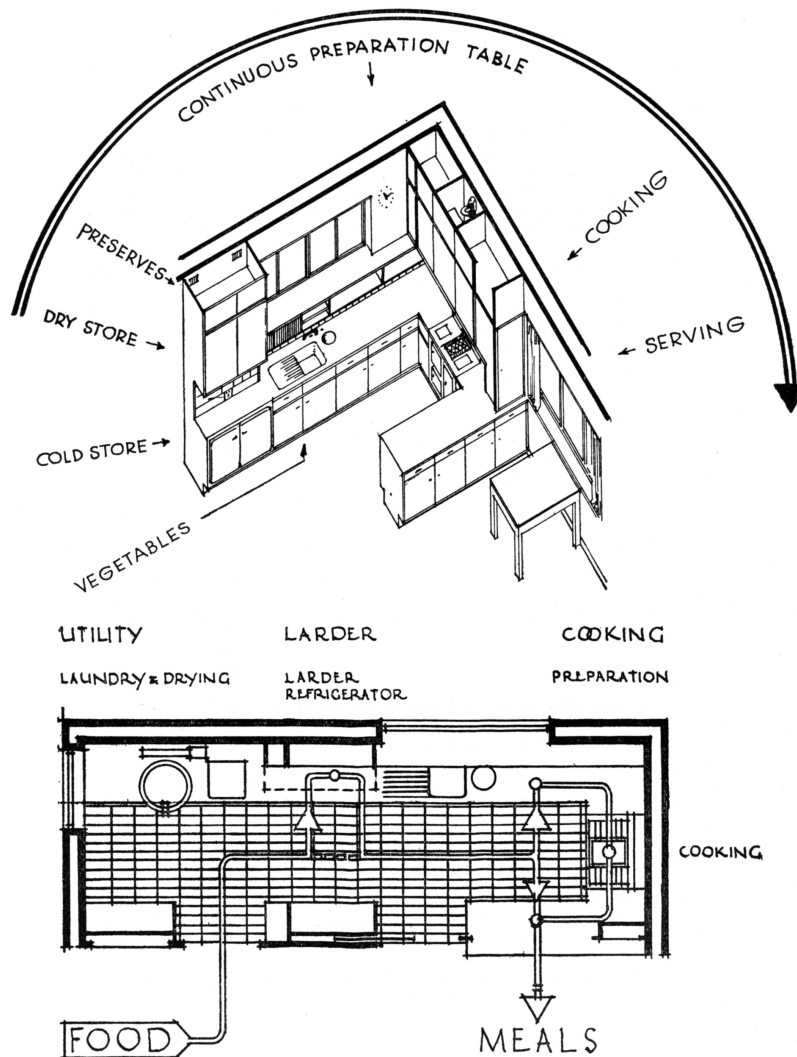


FIG. 16. Axonometric drawing and plan of kitchen. The design of the kitchen is based on the sequence of operations in preparing a meal. (See p. 122.)

The Taylorisation of the housewife's workplace. In the modern kitchen domestic operations proceed with production line efficiency: food goes in, meals come out! Illustration from Arnold Whittick's *Small House Today and Tomorrow*, 1947, p. 92.

Depicting a glamorous modern housewife with babe in arms mid-stride as she cut loose from an outdated monotone scullery, towards the ordered efficiency of a modern kitchen – with an Ascot appliance the chains of drudgery were broken, the freedom of the post-war kitchen beckoned!<sup>151</sup>

Modernising the domestic interior addressed the practical realities of back-breaking labour experienced by working-class housewives, revealed in Marjory Spring Rice's 1939 study as the burden of 'excessive child-bearing combined with incessant domestic toil' in cramped, inconvenient, and inadequately serviced accommodation with very little money.<sup>152</sup> But in addition to delivering women from the bondage of toil, domestic emancipation was also imagined as a form of social levelling that would have a visible legacy. As Spring Rice argued, the close quarters, lack of amenities, and poor condition of many working-class dwellings cost the working-class housewife a high price on her 'health and mental outlook', causing her to rapidly 'lose her looks and cease to take pride in her appearance'.<sup>153</sup> The antidote, promised by domestic modernity and visualised by advertisers such as Ascot, was a form of housewifery that did not leave a physical trace – that was indeed, glamorous, youthful. Aided by modern domestic technology, a more universal feminine ideal emerged that effaced the visual and corresponding class division between the domestic drudge and the lady of leisure. The idea of an equality of appearance re-surfaced here in the physical body of the housewife. In persons as much as in houses, social homogeneity was to be made visible by a smoothing out of class difference.

### **'More time for leisure' – domestic modernity and participatory citizenship**

At the heart of demands for material and environmental reforms within the home lay the prospect of free time: that there should be more of it, and more opportunities to put it to better use was a recurring theme in visions of the post-war home. Leisure was held to have democratic potential, providing the time for both personal development and the consolidation of community.

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<sup>151</sup> Ascot Appliances, in Pleydell-Bouverie, M. *Daily Mail Book of Post War Homes*. London: Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition Department, 1944.

<sup>152</sup> Spring Rice, op cit.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p.xv.

Figure 2.15.

*Release from drudgery..*

**ASCOT**

★ Kitchen planning takes first place in the investigations of the special Committee set up by the Gas Industry to study the uses of fuel in the home to lighten the daily domestic duties of the housewife.

... from the sweat and strain of the wash tub; from hours of back-breaking toil at the mangle; from all the irksome carrying and cleaning-up which coal fires entail. Monotonous drudgery, the stale atmosphere, heart-break and back-break, are gone. The magic of modern gas appliances, clean, economical, and easy to work, has abolished them. The intelligent housewife of to day has no taste for needless chores amid dullness and dirt. She demands—and we must give her—new kitchens; well planned, bright, airy and well equipped. Heat for washing, water heating and cooking will be instantly available by the turn of a gas tap. For the housewife this means contentment, liberty to devote time to family and friends, leisure to enjoy a richer and fuller life, and freedom from fatigue.

**ASCOT**

ASCOT GAS WATER HEATERS LTD, ASCOT WORKS, NORTH CIRCULAR ROAD, LONDON, N.W. 10

Ascot Kitchens advertising spoke to a feminine desire for emancipation from the back-breaking labour of housework. This 'Release from Drudgery' had a parallel in the provisions of the post-war council house kitchen, which, with its hot and cold running water, Belfast sink, ample storage space, separate cold larder, gas cooker, and servery hatch, represented the achievement of a new set of material entitlements for the housewife, won through the representation of women's concerns to the Dudley Committee. Ascot Appliances advertisement from the *Daily Mail Book of Ideal Homes*, 1944.

In mid-century Britain increasing leisure was both a conspicuous social fact, and an, as yet, incomplete project. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century leisure time (for men at least) had increased as working hours fell, from 53 per week in 1900, to 42 per week in 1960, a combined result of labour mobilisation and increased mechanisation.<sup>154</sup> Comparable freedoms were yet to be achieved for women, but labour-saving homes brought them within reach. Ascot Appliances for example pledged to 'liberate the housewife from drudgery to devote more time to family, friends, and leisure'.<sup>155</sup> Similarly, pressing for 'labour-saving homes' on behalf of those employed in 'the largest single occupation in the country', the SJCWW organisations stated that these were no less than 'their own right as workers, citizens, and human beings, to relief from unnecessary physical toil, and leisure to pursue interests and activities outside their work'.<sup>156</sup>

Gary Cross has argued that this ambition, inspired by the belief that industrial productivity 'was about to realize an historic dream' by providing for the satiation of human physical needs, produced a generation that was 'particularly alert to the democratic potential of leisure: its opportunities widely discussed and, in limited ways, practiced'.<sup>157</sup> According to Cross, 'people from every rank and persuasion believed that greater free time from work would create new opportunities for public leisure, leading to greater personal autonomy *and* renewed social solidarities'.<sup>158</sup> However, whilst more leisure was widely welcomed, its potential for misdirection also provided cause for alarm. Emerging forms of popular leisure in both working and middle-class culture attracted criticism for their apparent passivity and lack of seriousness. As we have seen, the new leisure culture of suburbia, with its bars, cars, and radio, were cast as escapist and superficial. An equivalent threat to national character, observed William Beveridge, were the 'football pools and other frivolous amusements' popular amongst working people, for which demand was generated by 'salesmanship' rather than social importance.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Burnett, op cit.

<sup>155</sup> Ascott Appliances, op cit.

<sup>156</sup> SJCWW, 'Design of Post-war Houses', cited in Scott, op cit., p.174.

<sup>157</sup> Gary Cross. *Time and Money: the Making of Consumer Culture*. London: Routledge, 1993, p.3.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>159</sup> Beveridge, cited in Lubbock, op cit., p.323.



An antidote to the frivolous use of leisure was identified in creative and constructive pastimes. Philanthropist Seebohm Rowntree, for example, in a social survey published in 1941, argued that '[t]rue recreation is constructive, and wholesome recreation implies *re-creating* physical, intellectual and moral vitality'.<sup>160</sup> This view had consequences for housing design. Arnold Whittick's treatise on the *Small House* observed that '[t]he most satisfying use of leisure is found in the exercise of some constructive, creative, or inquisitive activity' urging that in planning the house of the future 'more and more thought will have to be given to the use of leisure, and the facilities provided for these leisure pursuits'.<sup>161</sup> Whilst Abercrombie, in the *Plan for Plymouth*, discouraged the passive entertainment found 'at the road house or cinema' and backed instead the construction of 'the right sort of facilities [... that] give the craftsman, musician and painter with undeveloped talent a chance to show himself'.<sup>162</sup>

Within the home, the preoccupation with constructive leisure was translated into space for hobbies, homework, odd jobs, and family recreation. As well as providing separate interior spaces for family leisure and for 'study and homework by older children', Dudley homes also provided gardens for cultivation, sheds for tools.<sup>163</sup> Here, leisure was acknowledged to overlap with education reforms, the importance of homework anticipated 'to become more urgent with the new proposals for continued part-time education for all young people'.<sup>164</sup> This was to be education in its broadest sense, with garden sheds an adjunct to formal learning: '[t]heir provision encourages many of those activities which it is the object of the new education programme to bring about, e.g. individual hobbies, odd jobs, and active rather than passive forms of recreation'.<sup>165</sup> Closely following the Dudley model, Ernesettle's houses generally offered two downstairs reception rooms for recreational uses, and gardens equipped with both storage and shed space, space which, by all accounts was well used, with oral history participants reporting a wide range of hobby activities including model-making, poultry keeping, woodwork, and budgerigar breeding.

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<sup>160</sup> Rowntree, cited in Lubbock, op cit., p.321.

<sup>161</sup> Whittick, op cit., p.105.

<sup>162</sup> Abercrombie and Paton Watson, op cit., p.86.

<sup>163</sup> Ministry of Health, op cit., p.11.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p.16.

Figure 2.16.



'For every house a shed'. Sheds channelled domestic leisure towards *constructive* occupations: space for 'individual hobbies, odd jobs, and active rather than passive forms of recreation'.<sup>166</sup> Left: Tina and Diane Jones with Patchy the cat at 11 Lympne Avenue, c1968. Photograph courtesy of Lorraine Jones. Right: Carol Harrison at Hornchurch Road, 1958. Photograph courtesy of Jean Darby.

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p.16.

A faith in the emancipatory potential of leisure was, argues Cross, an attitude that 'contemporary policy and cultural languages offer few tools to articulate'.<sup>167</sup> Importantly, *constructive* leisure occupations provided 'an opportunity for personal participation outside the compulsion of the market and hierarchy of productive enterprise', enabling personal and social enrichments that were unavailable in other areas of everyday life.<sup>168</sup> Human fulfilment was to be found outside the workplace and beyond the marketplace, and modern housing would help to facilitate this by providing the space for constructive leisure.

## Conclusion

The post-war 'settlement' was at once physical (settling of former agricultural land), and political (a contract that attempted to reconcile the factional priorities of workers and capitalists through social welfare). It was performed through a process of spatial colonisation that created new territories of middleness, designed after an imagined vision of village life. In pursuit of a harmonious whole, the discursive construction of these modern neighbourhoods replaced class allegiance with nationalism and family as the principal resources of group identification, whilst at the same time enacting a significant material redistribution of resources which actually elevated huge numbers of people out of poverty. A desire for renewal and urban efficiency in the centre produced a spatial zoning of functions which saw residential uses relocated to the suburban periphery where family and child-rearing were brought into focus. The new domesticity envisioned by the planners produced a geographic mobility that was differentiated by gender, amplifying the potential sense of isolation experienced by women in particular, but also placing them centre-stage in the everyday life of the neighbourhood.

In the absence of class-based subjectivity, planners put forward family and Britishness as the anchors of post-war identity. Ernesettle residents were reminded of their place in national history through the naming of streets after Battle of Britain airfields, whilst the village form of their neighbourhood hinted at a heritage of English rural settlement. Their sense of cultural inclusion was to be further underscored through adopting the conventions of the domestic

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<sup>167</sup> Cross, 1993, op cit., pp.2 and 3.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p.8.

life of the family. New homes were to condition a certain household discipline in the reproduction of home-care, DIY, hobbies, and family leisure, whilst a healthier, cleaner environment would promote the health and efface degrading physical markers of class. Responding to both bottom-up pressure from working-class women, and to a conservative interest in improving the British population stock, post-war council housing was designed to deliver better living environments that would shape better citizens. Home-making structured a set of domestic disciplines that served to maintain both the physical and social conditions of post-war housing. In return for their co-operation in respect of homecare, family organisation and neighbourly behaviour, the state provided an elevated standard of living that crudely delivered to the working classes similar material conditions to those enjoyed by their middle-class peers. The luxury of a fixed bath and hot water, of separate bedrooms for parents and children, of outside space in which to garden and enjoy leisure, and of labour-saving domestic appliances, brought about a convergence in the everyday experience of the poorest classes and the middling ranks.

In effect, post-war council housing aspired to a democratization of domestic life. Imagined as a means of smoothing out grades of physical difference that separated the A1 from the C3 human, post-war housing reform sought to create a universal body to efface the corporeal register of class. Labour-saving appliances and efficient domestic design would reduce drudgery meaning working-class women would no longer be physically scarred by their work. Less labour would mean more leisure and this could be put to good use: developing the individual, supporting the family, or enriching the cultural life of the community. Even domestic architecture was designed to reflect the universality of the post-war vision – the repetitive pattern of pre-fabricated homes creating a visual order and uniformity that mirrored the imagined citizens within.

Yet the vision was compromised by inherent tensions: it favoured a certain type of white, British, nuclear family, and for all its classless rhetoric, at least some of its authors sought for themselves positions of power and superiority via its implementation. And perhaps more than any other factor, the gendered assumptions of work and domesticity that it presupposed would have serious implications for men and women on the new estates. Their experience forms the subject of the next chapter.

## Chapter 3 – Pioneers

Figure 3.1.



The 'Settler's Inn' sign; a hand-carved signboard that was hung in the Ernesettle Community Centre bar. Sign crafted by Charlie Sells, c.1982. Photograph courtesy of Rob Fraser

### Introduction – settling in

In 1982 a group of Ernesettle residents came together to establish a community centre in the recently closed Lakeside Infants School. Among the primary instigators of this initiative was Margaret Sells, a long-term resident, whose husband, Charlie, volunteered for my oral history cohort. Charlie recalled his wife's achievements with great pride, displaying for me his own contribution to the opening – a hand-carved signboard that had once hung above the community centre's bar. It depicted an American style wagon train in transit, its dedication: 'The Settler's Inn'. Inspired by a truncation of the name Ernesettle, the signboard also spoke of a further meaning that would have resonated with long-term residents: the idea of a pioneering settlement, of colonising virgin territory, of a shared experience of all-in-it-togetherness that helped to consolidate a community from the first Ernesettle settlers and flowed into the reservoir of local identity for generations afterwards.

This shared consciousness of settlement would no doubt have pleased the estate's planners who brought together inspiration from the early towns of New England, the 20<sup>th</sup> century experimental communities of the New Deal, the rural English Village, and Garden City, to produce a new model of habitation designed for the post-war era. The post-war neighbourhood was a re-imagining of these settlement types, re-configured and modernised to express

prevailing political priorities which put social harmony at the centre of contemporary culture. Self-contained, socially balanced, and peaceful, the neighbourhood sheltered a vision of community and domesticity, providing a modern model of orderly consensual citizenship. The neighbourhood concept gave spatial expression to the reconciliation of a number of different but overlapping social antagonisms: balancing town and country, man and nature, production and consumption, free markets and the managed economy, and tradition and modernity, to produce a vision of harmonious wholeness.

This chapter considers the genesis of a proud Ennesettle identity and its relationship to neighbourhood and home. What emerged in the later years as a conscious articulation of pioneer psychology had roots in the imagined vision of the estate's planners and the models of settlement that inspired their neighbourhood designs; but local identity was equally forged through the pre-war life experience of residents, and through the consequences of geographic and economic isolation that Ennesettle itself produced. Ennesettle identity therefore comprised a complex coalition of planning discourse and lived experience, its shape and nature neither wholly consequent on planners', nor residents', designs and desires.

A shared experience of material transformation was one source of collective identity that was recorded in oral memory as the dramatic transition from the pre-war tenement with shared tap and toilet, to the 'luxury' of a family home with fully plumbed bathroom, hot running water, and private WC! Material improvements made up for other privations, which could be temporarily endured with the support of family, neighbours, or even enterprising traders, in the expectation that the future held a more settled existence. Amongst the first residents of the late 1940s, wartime mobility assembled a population drawn from all corners of the nation. Transcending personal histories of trauma, war service, or poverty, provided a source of collective identification despite residents' diverse origins, laying the foundations of a bond of local identity that was born of the pioneer effect. Furthermore, having a council house enabled many Ennesettle residents to simultaneously enter the social mainstream, replacing the pre-war living conditions that had fashioned their social marginalisation, with an everyday experience that was in many ways equivalent to a more middle-class existence. Gratitude combined with social convention to facilitate the widespread adoption of the kind of domestic

citizenship planners had envisaged: core values of self-sufficiency, work ethic, and mutual aid, were enthusiastically expressed in home maintenance, gardening, and neighbourly reciprocity.

However, contrary to planners' intentions, class consciousness was never wholly effaced from everyday experience. Within the neighbourhood of the 1950s, economic scarcity shaped a culture of reciprocity and mutual support generating a robust sense of community that was inextricably bound to its members' economic capacity. It was also a community characterised by feminine experience: in this first decade Ernesettle's spatial isolation was most keenly felt by women whose lives beyond the neighbourhood were limited by time and money. Ernesettle's geographic position was isolating, but it was also insulating, allowing a self-generated culture to emerge and flourish. A lively street life animated by housewives daily provisioning and the mobile rounds of small traders contributed towards a sense of local collectivity. Children were the primary beneficiaries, their free-roaming play managed by the co-option of the community into responsibilities of supervision and policing. For the first generation of children born in Ernesettle, local identity was forged from the collective memories of a shared childhood, a childhood in which social, cultural, and environmental factors coalesced through the experience of spatial freedom in the neighbourhood. This produced a distinctly place-based identity, harnessed to the specific qualities of the landscape and the social life of the estate. Although not equivalent to the classless vision of the planners' imaginary village, in Ernesettle place-based identity served as a parallel or alternative form of social allegiance to the class-based articulations of identity that had served before the war.

Consumerism also destabilised former channels of identity formation. With the arrival of mass consumer culture, domestic goods began to take the place of domestic practices in the mediation of social value. Economic prosperity brought an abundance of choice and new marketing channels to convey the benefits of consumer spending. Advertising promised endless wish-fulfillment, offering new routes to self-gratification and peer approval that did not always require the hard graft of domestic labour. Old habits were slow to die however, and in Ernesettle consumer products were co-opted into established patterns of neighbouring and sociability that had their roots in the early arrivals' experience of settlement.

### **'We survived' – new arrivals and the pioneer effect**

Arrivals in the late 1940s recalled the experience of 'walking the plank' to their new homes. With no pavements, no street lights, and houses being built all around them, the first settlers unloaded their worldly goods from the improvised transport of a borrowed coal lorry and carefully carried them across wooden planks which bridged the muddy ground from road to front door. All overlooked by an audience that included more construction workers than neighbours. In the early years between 1947 and 1953, the sounds of scraping shovels and the banter of workmen filled the air, as house building progressed at a rapid pace. This was a working building site – a neighbourhood that was literally being built around its first residents. A local housing shortage in Plymouth meant that as soon as a house was completed it was occupied by a grateful tenant even before the plaster was dry! 'There seemed to be mud everywhere' remembered one resident of Hornchurch Road, but the construction work had its upsides for local children who would use unfinished buildings as playgrounds at the weekends, or borrow builder's sand for making sandcastles.<sup>1</sup> And whilst the dust might have caused a problem for housewives, the luxury of a fixed bath and hot running water meant it was easily dealt with. Despite the inconvenience of living on an unfinished estate, the benefits of a new house far outweighed the difficulties. Many of Ennesettle's first residents had left behind overcrowded lodgings close to the city centre – at the time it was not uncommon for Plymouthians to live in tenement flats comprising just one or two rooms with a shared water tap in the back yard, and a tin bath warmed in front of the kitchen fire for a weekly wash. Under these circumstances, to get a new house in Ennesettle was for many, a dream come true.

For those who experienced the first years of occupation, the shared frustrations of mud, dust, noise, and limited shops, alongside the delights of a bath, garden, and separate bedrooms for the kids helped to forge a pioneering spirit that could be summed up in the sentiment 'it was hard, but we were glad of the house'.<sup>2</sup> A little recognized phenomenon, according to Alison Ravetz, the 'pioneer' effect', was also found in new towns and similar deliberately

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<sup>1</sup> Bernice Smale. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky, 25/02/2010.

<sup>2</sup> Beta Murphy. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky and Rob Fraser, 06/10/2010.



'planted' settlements where a body of people suddenly found themselves all in the same boat together.<sup>3</sup> In the late 1940s, the shaping of post-war landscapes in the image of an idealised English village contributed towards an emergent local identity underscored by a psychology of settlement. Collectivity was key to both planners' intentions, and the experience of everyday Ernesettlers, who, having suffered the deprivations of war now found themselves facing *en masse* the challenges of relocation to the city periphery. British nationalism and the shared consciousness of the significant material transformation provided by their new homes served as unifying resources in the birth of a nascent Ernesettle identity.

The pioneer experience was conveyed in oral memory in a number of ways. Social links were vital, whether forged in the new neighbourhood where the mutual support of neighbours could transform the sense of isolation, or through the persistence of links to former locations which provided a lifeline of survival. The experience of arriving in a new place with no friends or connections could be socially daunting, especially for those women who lacked the social connections of the workplace that their husbands took for granted. Under such circumstances a friendly neighbour could be a vital source of moral support, and some were no doubt luckier than others in this respect. In Tangmere Avenue, for example, Bernice Smale developed a close friendship with her neighbour at no. 84.

Well I used to pop in to my neighbours of a morning. She was the one to speak to me first 'cause I was a very shy woman, for years I couldn't mix well at all, but she said 'come on in for a cup of tea', and I used to go in for a cup of tea and a chat with her in the mornings.<sup>4</sup>

For others, it was contact with the outside world that felt like a lifeline. Beta Murphy explained how she 'survived' with the help of the traders whom she had known before the move.

My grocer used to come out here and deliver. Before we got married we lived in Kensington Terrace right opposite the entrance of Freedom Fields, and the grocer [there] used to bring out my stuff to me, that's how we survived. I would give him a list and he would bring it out. We had the Co-op vegetable man come around and that was before we had the shops here.<sup>5</sup>

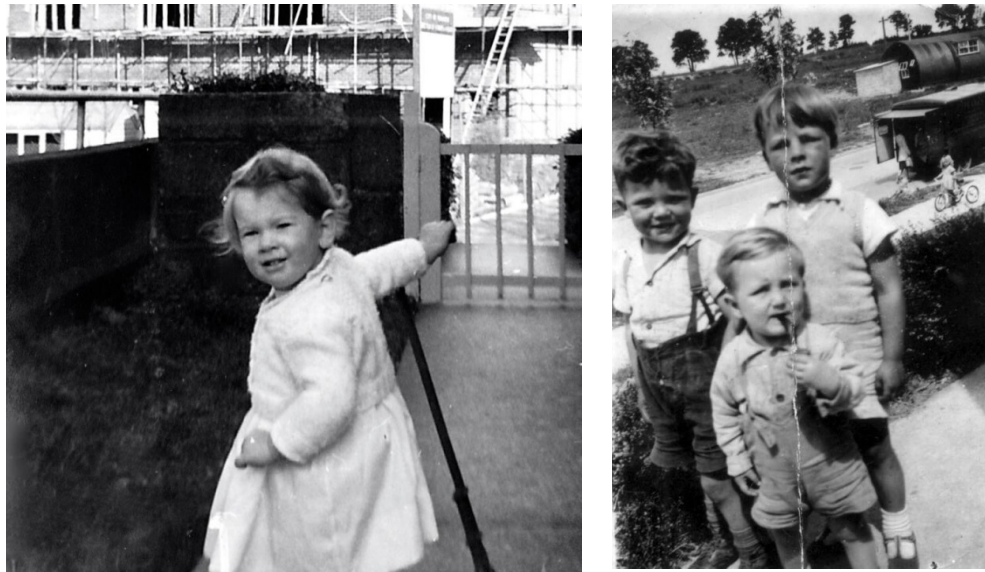
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<sup>3</sup> Ravetz, op cit., p.171.

<sup>4</sup> Smale, op cit.

<sup>5</sup> Murphy, 2010, op cit.

Figure 3.2.



In the early years of the estates, professional photographers found lucrative custom in the new arrivals, few of whom had personal cameras to capture their life-changing new beginnings. Children shot spontaneously in front gardens were a common subject, perhaps the result of a pay-when-you-see-the-print doorstep negotiation.

Left: Mandy Hogben with photographer's tripod, houses under construction behind, c.1950. Photograph courtesy of Mandy Hogden. Right: Richard Michael, Mike Swann, and friend, c.1952, at West Malling Avenue, with Ernesettle Green, nissen hut and mobile shop behind. Photograph courtesy of Carol Edwards.

A diversity of regional origin amongst new residents enhanced a sense of pioneering settlement – a notional map of the first residents' journeys from birthplace to Ernesettle would track pathways from points across the UK and beyond. The contingencies of war had re-shuffled the deck of Plymouth's population, bringing soldiers, sailors, and airmen from the British regions and allied nations into the city. These men settled with local girls or were sometimes followed by sweethearts from their home towns to set up home in Plymouth. Drawn from a surprisingly wide geographic area family members within the oral history cohort hailed from Sussex, Scotland, Wales, Liverpool, Yorkshire, Manchester, and Poland, as well as Plymouth, Devon and Cornwall. Mrs Jones, who came from Scotland to join her husband in Plymouth recalled that:

When I came down first I just couldn't understand people talking. In the shops one day I heard this person talking about her maid. I looked and then I thought she didn't look as if she could afford a maid. It was much later I learned it was her daughter she was speaking of!<sup>6</sup>

Aside from an education in local dialect, varied regional origins do not seem to have created any difficulties of assimilation. Wartime mobility coupled with the effects of the proliferation of the mass media in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century had generated 'an entirely new bond of unity between homes and regions the length and breadth of Britain'.<sup>7</sup> It was a bond, described by Becky Conekin as a 'unity through diversity', in which regional identities were not homogenised, but rather became 'central to a new story of Britain in the post-war world'.<sup>8</sup> Britishness was repeatedly reasserted in the post-war vision of politicians and planners, even down to the naming of Ernesettle streets after Battle of Britain airfields. The effect of a British 'bond of unity' coincided with a consciousness of the shared experience of social elevation represented by a sudden improvement in material circumstances. Whilst it would be misleading to conflate this with the homogenous middle condition imagined by planners, it was nonetheless a step in that direction. As Mrs Jones remark attests, residents of Ernesettle were united by their improved social position, which was in this case measured in terms of their relation to domestic service. The

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<sup>6</sup> In the south-west, 'maid' is used in substitution for daughter, or young woman. Mike Dunstan, quoting Mrs Jones. 'Echoes 2 More Stories'. *Ernesettle Community Stories Project*. Plymouth: Plymouth Library Services, February 1993.

<sup>7</sup> David Powell. *Nationhood and Identity. The British State since 1800*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2002, p.175.

<sup>8</sup> Conekin, op cit., p.131.

'maid' who surprised Mrs Jones in her eavesdropping was not a servant but a daughter, and the only maids-of-work to be found on the estate were those with pre-war experience of employment in domestic service, now a near-redundant occupation. Class, or at least a consciousness of relative wealth, had not been eliminated by the transition to the new neighbourhood, but there was a novel subtlety to the way in which this was expressed and experienced. To use a pertinent analogy, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century stratification between women who *had* maids, and women who *were* maids had lost much of its relevance. As the middle-class expanded throughout the inter-war years these lines of division were becoming more permeable or disappearing altogether, the 'servant problem' of the 1930s capturing both the upward mobility of the skilled working classes and the downward trajectory of the upper middles. According to popular myth, wartime necessity had helped to normalise these social currents, reconciling the middle classes in particular to their reduced expectations. As the *Western Morning News* war correspondent H.P.Twyford recorded at the time:

the proud housewife of Mannamead went on her hands and knees to clean her own doorstep without any loss of dignity or prestige, and learnt with a new appreciation and understanding that Mrs Jones, the daily help, was something of a jewel, certainly a fellow creature in days when good companionship was necessary at every turn.<sup>9</sup>

But the inclusivity of the post-war vision had its limits. Whilst a reinvigorated British nationalism held the potential to unite people across regions and classes, it was not (yet) expansive enough to accommodate racial difference. The consequential marginalisation of non-white, non-British Ernesettlers can only be partially and speculatively reconstructed by its silence. With a population that was (and still is) predominantly white and predominantly British, I have struggled to represent the voice of those with other backgrounds. As Alison Ravetz has documented, council housing allocation policy was often discriminatory, requiring several years of residency in a municipality in order to qualify.<sup>10</sup> And with many private landlords openly operating colour bars, Commonwealth immigrants arriving in Britain in the 1950s and 60s were left with few choices, resulting in ethnic concentrations in

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<sup>9</sup> Mannamead was, in the 1940s, Plymouth's most salubrious suburb comprising of large villas set in tree-lined avenues. H. P. Twyford. *It Came to Our Door. Plymouth in the World War*. Second Impression 1946. Plymouth: Underhill (Plymouth) Ltd, 1946, p.15.

<sup>10</sup> Ravetz, op cit., p.130.

urban districts with cheap sub-standard property.<sup>11</sup> Under these circumstances the allocation of a new house in Ernesettle to an ethnic immigrant family was unlikely, and indeed the only known minority in the early years was Polish. The experience of Ernesettle's two or three Poles is hard to reconstruct: they were probably airmen stationed at RAF Harrowbeer just north of Plymouth who had married local girls, or refugees interred in neighbouring Ivybridge.<sup>12</sup> Despite the heroic service of Poles fighting for the allies, the reception they received from locals may have been polarised according to which of these circumstances brought them to Plymouth.

For Ernesettle's tiny and isolated minorities, securing a council house may not have delivered the social harmony of the planners promise. For its majority white British population however, the experience wrought a transformation in quality of life both materially and psychologically. Not only did resettlement mean relocation to a brand new house, but it also provided an opportunity to transcend one's origins, attaining a more balanced and settled everyday life. For Mrs Murphy's husband, for example, a childhood of poverty, exploitation, and cruel treatment gave the move to Ernesettle an especial value.

[He was from] Glasgow, the Gorbels of Glasgow. [Where] He had a helluva life with the nuns. [He grew up in a Catholic children's home.] His leg from his knee down to the ankle was gorged out, where he tried to escape, and the nuns pulled him back over the railings and he was gorged out. You couldn't mention the nuns to him. Their homes was not very nice. And then he when he came to Plymouth he was stationed out Raglan Barracks and met his fate [Mrs Murphy]. He was happy as can be [in Ernesettle] but he had a helluva life as a child.<sup>13</sup>

In this context, the environmental improvement that came as a consequence of moving to Ernesettle helped to support a psychological sense of 'moving on' as much as moving in. Mrs Murphy, herself, had also experienced a childhood of relative material and emotional deprivation compared to her life after marriage. Raised in a family of 11 children, by a mother who was widowed when Mrs Murphy was nine, Mrs Murphy's childhood was remembered in terms of grief for the loss of her loving father, and of the

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<sup>11</sup> Steve Humphries and John Taylor. *The Making of Modern London 1945-1985*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd, 1986, p.120.

<sup>12</sup> I met one Polish resident in Ernesettle but unfortunately he did not wish to take part in an oral history recording, a fact which, in itself, may be suggestive of the difficulties of assimilation, and of barriers of language.

<sup>13</sup> Murphy, 2010, op cit.

turbulent relationship with her mother who was (perhaps understandably, given the challenges of raising 11 children alone and without income) 'a fiend', emotionally distant and argumentative. For Mr and Mrs Murphy, marriage provided a watershed after which the material *and* emotional deprivations of early life were cast off. In Ernesettle, the family domesticity that was a core feature of the neighbourhood design provided Mr and Mrs Murphy with a social structure that was, by comparison to their early lives, a source of stability and liberation. With backgrounds that were marked by insecurity and emotional impoverishment, the certainties of home life were a comfort and an anchor.

A pioneering psychology was shaped by the knowledge of previous lives in more difficult circumstances, furthermore, for women such as Mrs Murphy this settlement subjectivity was also informed by wartime experience of purpose and action. Blitz stories were common to the female oral history cohort: Mrs Murphy had seen death at first hand serving as a Red Cross Nurse; Bernice Smale had watched German bombers flying overhead one night, finding her workplace in Devonport obliterated the next morning; Barbara W. had lived opposite Freedom Fields Maternity Hospital and witnessed its bombing, her father bringing dead babies out of the rubble the next day to lay out on the family's kitchen table. These were women whose life experience had hardened them and yet confirmed their capacity for endurance. Mrs Murphy knew herself to be a capable and brave, more so in some respects than her husband who 'didn't know much warfare' having spent his entire war posted in the relatively safety of domestic barracks.

[My husband] never had air raids. I knew more warfare than him. As soon as the siren went I had to don me uniform on and rush up to North Hill. St Mathias church was my post. I was too busy to be frightened. It was exciting. Bad times, but you had to make the best of it. The worst one, was when Spooners was on fire in Old Town Street, and I was talking to a Policeman. And with the tiles [...] they were flying around wholesale. And I was talking to this Policeman, and then next thing, his body was stood up without a head. And then the body just keeled over. Slate took it off. Took his head off clean.<sup>14</sup>

This context generated a renewed appreciation of life's comforts and certainties – post-war domesticity, with its return to calm and security, was to

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<sup>14</sup> Murphy, 2010, op cit.

be embraced. For Mrs Murphy and her contemporaries, becoming a housewife after marriage did not necessarily entail any sense of compromise or loss of independence. It was rather, a choice through which their sense of feminine competency exhibited in war could be reproduced in peace. As Sheila Rowbotham has argued, female mobilization and home front propaganda during wartime created a new version of womanhood based on heroic service and personal denial that endured in the post-war period 'becom[ing] a crucial linchpin of social cohesion'.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, within the complementary partnership of an 'equal but different' marriage, personal sacrifices were expected on both sides (see chapter 2). An attitude prevailed that housewifery, like any occupation, would have its ups and downs, but if it was occasionally unfulfilling it was no more so than the working life of one's husband, who in his own daily grind, had a different set of compromises and discomforts to bear.

### **'A bath every day' – making the transition: cleanliness, class, respectability**

Alongside the psychological certainties provided by the post-war home, Ernesettle's housing also brought material comforts. Bathing was one such 'luxury', featuring in oral memory with great frequency. The accessibility of a private supply of hot and cold water and a fixed bath was the benchmark of housing modernity for planners and tenants alike, becoming the yardstick by which residents measured their changing circumstances. Bathing was much remarked upon in oral history, underlining the perceived significance of this material improvement not just for its novelty, but also because being a 'luxury', it implied, indeed, delivered class mobility. On moving into a new council house, the first residents of Ernesettle experienced conditions of everyday life that they associated with a more luxurious, superior class of existence.

A metaphorical and literal watershed, this transition in circumstances was initiated by the local Housing Inspector's assessment of existing living conditions, and culminated in the allocation of a new house with all 'mod cons'. Mrs Murphy, for example, was living with her husband and two small children in a flat with no bathroom when the Housing Inspector called.

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<sup>15</sup> Rowbotham, op cit., p.220.

When the Inspector come to see me about getting the house, he said "where's your bathroom?" I said "out there hanging up on the wall!" "Oh dear" he says, "you've gotta be housed. With children you can't keep on doing the tin bath business." We were glad of the [new] house... Oh it was lovely to have a bath, with the hot water coming out the tap.<sup>16</sup>

Modern bathrooms gave Ernesettle residents the means by which to remove the stigmatising dirt of a life in poverty – the ability at all times to present a respectable appearance. This produced, what Kristen Ross has called a 'qualitatively new lived relationship to cleanliness', evident in the post-war emergence of a mass market for bath soap, shampoos, and washing machines, which promised to deliver personal fulfilment through clean bodies, shiny hair, and spotless whites.<sup>17</sup> This particular promise held an especial resonance for working-class communities, where the presentation of a respectable public appearance had high cultural value. Within working-class culture relative social position was expressed through the concept of 'respectability', a quality which distinguished the blameless from the reckless poor. Respectability was, as Alison Ravetz has argued, 'endlessly articulated by working-class people' in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and as such, it 'needs to be rescued from our own misconceptions, for it is neither a retrospective present-day invention nor a spurious and hypocritical construction of its own time'.<sup>18</sup> Linked, in general, to place of residence and quality of homes, respectability was essentially a measure of distinction that separated oneself and one's family, for other 'rough' sorts. A socio-psychological corollary to precarious circumstances, it functioned 'to confer some sort of security during periods of rapid and unsettling social change: a bulwark for those who stood most to lose in an involuntary social mixing that could easily suck them down into circumstances beyond their control'.<sup>19</sup> Conditioned by the working class culture of respectability, Ernesettle residents valued their new sanitary facilities highly and these were enthusiastically adopted into new daily routines. In some cases this had ironic consequences, entering family mythology.

My parents had two children when they first moved to Ernesettle into a brand new house. Hot running water, indoor toilet and bath – sheer

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<sup>16</sup> Murphy, 2010, op cit.

<sup>17</sup> Ross, op cit., pp.71-104.

<sup>18</sup> Ravetz, op cit., p.26.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.26.



luxury, no more filling the old zinc bath by the fire once a week. There were no pavements outside the houses, only mud paths, but who cared, they could now have a bath when they felt like it – every day – sometimes twice a day, until the dreaded RASH appeared. What kind of terrible disease had [the children] picked up playing in the mud. A visit to the doctor soon solved the problem. Having only been used to a bath once a week and now having a bath every day – sometimes twice a day they were allergic to soap and water, their ‘delicate’ skins were not used to such HARSH treatment (interview with anon.).<sup>20</sup>

### **'Your House: Your Home' – home-care and citizenship**

Respectability was also communicated through the public face of the home. This could be demonstrated through cleanliness, but also through home maintenance, which tenant guidance sought to encourage by activating both a sense of ownership and of neighbourly obligation. The first edition of the tenant's handbook (tellingly titled *Your House, Your Home*), provided residents with practical guidance on their domestic duties that included a list of tasks and the frequency with which they should be undertaken: ‘care of windows and doors (oil hinges twice a year); maintenance of fireplaces (empty the ash pan frequently, clean the flues once a week and have the chimney swept regularly)’ and so on.<sup>21</sup> Such advice reflected an understanding of the home as a machine to be maintained in a serviceable condition for optimum performance: well-oiled, safe, and free from accumulated dirt, but it also implied a regime of homecare that would demand time, graft and skill.

As landlords, Plymouth Corporation were conscious that some new tenants may lack the necessary skills, employing a variety of tactics to encourage conscientious home-care amongst tenants. Families requiring an immersive re-education were recommended for a short stay in one of two Reception Houses on the new estates: dwellings in which ‘families might have a short period of guidance on good home management prior to being installed in Council accommodation’.<sup>22</sup> For others, handbooks and tenancy agreements offered a combination of friendly instruction as well as censorious directive, whilst the Corporation’s Rent and Welfare Officers provided tenant supervision in a neighbourly form. Homecare was pictured as a family duty – as the handbook reminded Ernesettle residents, the obligation to ‘take pride in

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<sup>20</sup> Dunstan, op cit.

<sup>21</sup> Plymouth Corporation. *Your House Your Home*, op cit., p.15.

<sup>22</sup> Plymouth Corporation, Minutes of the Housing Committee, op cit. 13/01/48: minute 1236.

houses and gardens' applied to all household members: 'husbands, wives and children alike'.<sup>23</sup> Oral memory attests to the success of this domestic instruction, with 'failures' being reported as both exceptional and shocking. Mr and Mrs Ashton, who moved to a house on Ernesettle Green in the mid-1950s, were appalled by the state it was left in by the departing tenants, spending many weeks returning the property to good condition. Their horror was not just a result of dirt – the home had literally seized up through lack of maintenance.

Mr Ashton: The people who left here [when we moved in] had two or three daughters, and they must've been 16, 17. They could've never had a bath – all the taps were seized up. [...] I had to get hammer and loosen all of them up to free 'em, you know? [...] Undo all the taps, put all new washers in. They never even used the hot water or nothing. The stove was there, and when I looked at the stove, the canvas [lino] was like that [buckled] underneath it, and when I pulled it out it was all matchsticks, fluff and grease.

Mrs Ashton: As it got dirty, they just put another bit of canvas on top. They left canvas out there which was like a jigsaw puzzle, just pieces placed together. Mr Ashton: [...] When they painted a room they went round the furniture. Never pulled the furniture out, went round it! 'Cause when we pulled the furniture out there's all the [spaces]. [...] I had to get me hammer out to open the windows. [...] Yeah, it weren't easy when we got in here, but [we] cleaned it all up.<sup>24</sup>

These were a different 'sort of people' than the respectable Ashtons, a family whose inability to meet widely held standards of domestic competence marked them out for social ostracism, they led an unconventional, shiftless, and itinerant life, failing to settle and adopt the norms of the neighbourhood. Whilst the post-war estate democratised access to a domestic everyday life, those who failed to conform to the standards of the new mainstream were perceived as outsiders. Failure to keep house was not simply a failure of domestic hygiene, it also implied a lack of personal and familial discipline, and a failure to integrate socially.

Furthermore, in the austerity years following the end of the war, cleaning, home-care, and domestic craft provided the most accessible means to demonstrate tenants' respectability and appreciation of the new home. Interior decoration and DIY would not take off as common domestic practices

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<sup>23</sup> Plymouth Corporation. *Your House Your Home*, op cit., p.1.

<sup>24</sup> Gerald Ashton and Mrs Ashton. Interview by Rob Fraser, 12/06/2014.

until incomes rose in the later 1950s and 60s, so for the first tenants of Ernesettle, furnishing was heavily dependent on financial circumstances, and often comprised a mixture of gifts, goods bought with the windfall of demob money, acquired on the black market, or through hire purchase. Bernice Smale and her husband Peter received an Indian carpet from Peter's boss, acquired a quantity of parquet-patterned lino in exchange for some tyres procured from Peter's workplace, and they spent Peter's demob money – a £100 – on a three piece suite, a dining suite, sideboard, and bureau.<sup>25</sup> Their neighbours, Charlie and Margaret Sells, were given a carry cot and a pram by Charlie's instructor in the dockyard, and covered the floors with rugs that Margaret made herself.<sup>26</sup> Gifts from the boss or from parents reinforced ties to work and family, whilst DIY and home crafts connected men and women to their homes through the investment of their own labour. The resulting interior arrangements, although highly personal and meaningful, were perhaps somewhat haphazard and circumstantial.

### **'Owner-occupiers of your neighbourhood' – collectivity and the home**

Domestic responsibility was not simply a private matter, it also served to make the neighbourhood a better place for everyone. Plymouth Corporation sought to activate home-owner-like behaviours amongst its tenants, but to do so for the benefit of the community as a whole. As City Engineer, James Paton Watson reminded them in his introduction to the handbook: '[y]ou are fortunate in not only being the owner-occupier of your home but the owner-occupier of your neighbourhood'. As 'lords of such a manor', Paton Watson urged tenants to 'act as if it belongs to you – as it does – and react as if it had been bought out of your savings'.<sup>27</sup> Plymouth was not alone in delivering this message, Dagenham Borough Council *Tenant's Handbook* of 1949 carried an almost identical message, enjoining tenants to 'treat your house as if it were your own – it is'.<sup>28</sup>

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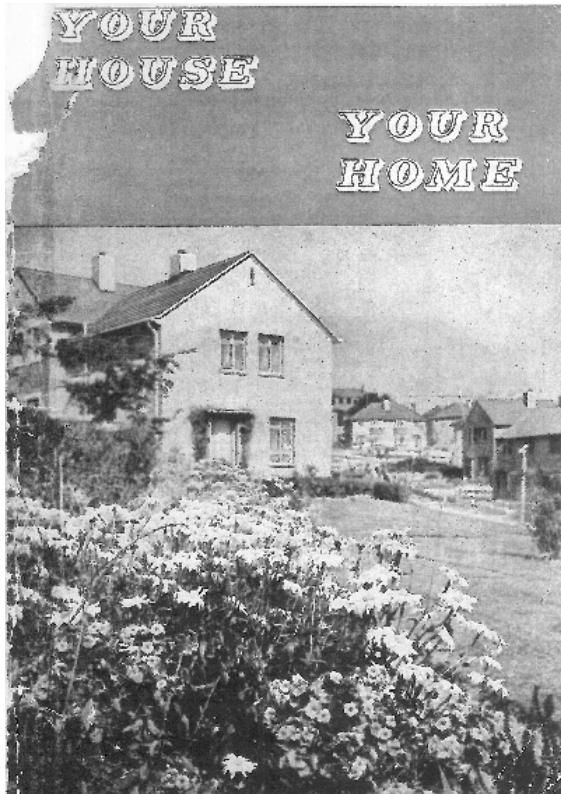
<sup>25</sup> Smale, op cit.

<sup>26</sup> Sells, Charles (Charlie). Interview by Hilary Kolinsky, 24/05/2012.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>28</sup> Cited in Ravetz, op cit., p.123.

Figure 3.3.



Tenants' guidance sought to activate a sense of home-ownership, as is evident in the title of the first tenants' handbook – *Your House, Your Home*, c. 1950. But this sense of private domestic responsibility went hand-in-hand with a collective obligation towards the community. As Paton Watson reminded residents, 'you are fortunate in not only being the owner-occupier of your home but the owner-occupier of your neighbourhood'.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Plymouth Corporation. *Your House Your Home*, op cit., p.12.

Parallels could be drawn between this sense of ownership, and the homeownership witnessed in the preceding decades by new arrivals in speculative suburbia, with their enthusiastic adoption of consumer domesticity. But on the post-war estate, communal and individual interests were to advance in parallel, with the 'creditable' behaviour of tenants being sought as encouragement to build more homes for others in need. As G. Greenhalgh urged:

Tenants of municipal dwellings are the custodians of property which has been provided by the general body of ratepayers and tax payers, at very high costs. Therefore the tenants, being ratepayers and taxpayers, live in property which they have helped to provide, and in their own interests they should protect and care for it in every way. [...] Unfortunately, there are still thousands of applicants waiting for accommodation, and we shall have to continue building for several years if the needs of all these families are to be fully met and, naturally, the Housing Committee will be more encouraged to continue building if the estates already established are in every way creditable.<sup>30</sup>

Although modified by the addition of *collective* obligation, this message was somewhat reminiscent of the Octavia Hill model of housing management which sought to activate domestic duty in tenants through a system of encouragement and reward. Through her philanthropic projects of slum regeneration in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Hill is credited with reconfiguring the relationship between tenant and landlord – creating a new model of mutual obligation in which each had duties to the other.<sup>31</sup> Hill's legacy persisted, in Plymouth at least, in the form of the combined role of Rent Collector and Welfare Officer. Under Hill's system, the role of Housing Manager was a female occupation, its successful performance dependent on getting to know people in their homes. As Ravetz states, 'a personal relationship with tenants was crucial to fostering a sense of community responsibility'.<sup>32</sup> As such, managers could and should only operate at a small scale, the optimum size of estate for a manager being not more than 300 units.<sup>33</sup> Ravetz argues that the overlapping of the personal and the professional was diminished, if not

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<sup>30</sup> Plymouth Corporation. *Your House Your Home*, op cit., p.7.

<sup>31</sup> Anne Anderson and Elizabeth Darling. 'The Hill Sisters: Cultural Philanthropy and the Embellishment of Lives in late-Nineteenth-Century England'. In *Women and the Making of Built Space in England 1870-1950*, by Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth, 32-48. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, p.40.

<sup>32</sup> Ravetz, op cit. p.30.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.112.

eradicated, by the institutionalization of housing management into local authorities, who instead 'allocated hard or technical functions to male managers, with welfare regarded as an "added on" function of management, to be used in special cases or crises'.<sup>34</sup> However, on Plymouth's post-war estates this would appear not to have been the case. A highly visible role, and one which came with a responsibility to set a good example, Plymouth's Rent Collector/Welfare Officers lived and raised families within their collection territories, often taking on duties above and beyond their job description.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Plymouth Corporation's Housing Estates Manager used the tenant's handbook to urge residents to 'regard the Rent Collector as your friend'.<sup>36</sup> This neighbourly quality is significant, reflecting a sensitivity to the importance of neighbouring of working-class communities, where, as Alison Ravetz has observed '[t]he role of neighbour was a crucial but delicate one, requiring a sense of how to give help when needed without causing embarrassment, and of when to tactfully withdraw'.<sup>37</sup>

Ernesettle had two Rent Collector/Welfare Officers: Mr Train who lived first in West Malling Avenue and later in Lakeside Drive, and Mr Haines who lived in Hawkinge Gardens. Fred Train was an especially well remembered character whose working life was dedicated to his role on the estate. From his arrival with his young family in the late 1940s, to his retirement in the late 1970s, Fred was a key figure in local life: collecting rents, helping tenants, operating the youth club, and running the local football team. Such an embedded relationship within the community produced knowledge of tenants' personal circumstances that required tact and empathy, and generated a peculiar kind of mutual dependency. As a resident himself, the *rent man* could not afford to alienate tenants, not least because in so doing he might risk bringing ostracism on his wife, and perhaps especially his children – vulnerable to visitations of playground retribution. As Fred's daughter Alison recalled of her father, negotiating the dual challenge of discharging a professional obligation whilst being a discreet neighbour 'wasn't easy'.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>35</sup> Plymouth Corporation, Minutes of the Housing Committee, op cit., minute 11/05/1948, 3179.

<sup>36</sup> Plymouth Corporation. *Your House Your Home*, op cit., p.7.

<sup>37</sup> Ravetz, op cit., p.164.

I don't think his job title was just Rent Collector. He was Rent Collector *and* Welfare Officer. [...] So he wouldn't just say 'gimme your money' and sign the book. He would be talking to people, [...] and finding out what their needs were and what they would like to have on the estate. But he was seeing people on a regular basis by going knocking on the door, whether they were in or not he had to find 'em sometime. And that probably wasn't easy because he would know that they didn't have any money, or he would know who was [in difficulties], 'cause you can't stop people from talking. So probably Mrs Smith over the road would talk about Mrs Jones and say 'poor soul she didn't have enough for her milk and bread today'. You know, so he would know that and being the caring person that he was, if he could fix things he would.<sup>38</sup>

It is testament to Fred Train's character that he successfully negotiated this delicate relationship for three decades. By all accounts (as Alison alludes above) although tenants occasionally pretended to be out to delay paying the rent, by offering help where he was able, Fred managed to procure their cooperation in the longer term. As one of several local figures<sup>39</sup> who knew most, if not all, of the estate families and was familiar with their circumstances, Fred Train was able to act as a fixer and a mediator, arranging reciprocal services between tenants, or representing their needs to the local authority. This was an evolution in the role of Housing Manager above and beyond the model established by Octavia Hill, for whilst her female agents of Victorian philanthropy were encouraged to develop relationships with their tenants, ultimately they were not 'of their kind'. In contrast, the Rent Collector/Welfare Officers of Plymouth's post-war estates were on a more-or-less equal footing with their tenants socially. In accordance with the planners' vision of a socially homogenous neighbourhood, they were as much a part of the community as the tenants they served.

This social equivalence was in marked contrast to the landlord/tenant relationships that had existed for residents in their pre-Ernesettle dwellings. Recalling their private tenancies in poor quality tenements, several residents spoke of the autocratic or exploitative practices of their private landlords to demonstrate the advantages of the move to Ernesettle.

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<sup>38</sup> Alison Train. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky, 19/07/2012.

<sup>39</sup> Other such figures included Dr. James, midwife Sister Beckett, the vicars of St Aidans, and Methodist organiser Mrs Beck.

Figure 3.4.



Rent man and Welfare Officer, Fred Train with his youth club football team. On a more-or-less equal footing with their tenants socially, Plymouth Corporation's rent men were an embedded feature of local communities. Fred served Ernesettle as rent man and youth club leader for nearly three decades from his arrival in the late-1940s until his retirement in the mid-1970s. Photograph courtesy of Pat Pott who met her husband (also pictured) at the youth club.



Roger Beck's parents, for example, had 'a rather difficult landlady, who made all kinds of regulations about when you can put out washing and that sort of thing. [...] I think they were very glad to move'.<sup>40</sup> Whilst Bernice Smale's former landlord had taken rent from her for an attic room with no water supply, later condemned by the Housing Inspector as uninhabitable, but had 'got away with it for years'. In these circumstances, the relatively benign conditions and obligations of a council tenancy actually advanced tenants sense of autonomy as well as their material circumstances: as Bernice Smale concluded, after all that 'you could see what a boon it was to come here'.<sup>41</sup>

### **'All the dishes were waiting for me' – gender and domestic duty**

Gratitude for, and delight in their new homes inspired many Ernesettle residents to adopt the norms of family domestic duty with enthusiasm. Conditioned by a cultural inheritance of working-class respectability, which coincided with a repeatedly expressed, institutionally supported, articulation of homecare as a citizenly duty, the early years of the post-war estate witnessed the widespread expression of model domesticity.

As we saw earlier in the chapter, in homes and in the neighbourhood, husbands, wives, sons, and daughters were all exhorted by tenant guidance to actively share in the making of the family home. More than a building providing shelter, or an architectural expression, *home* was to be constituted through a set of practical operations and duties that should run like a smoothly oiled machine. This, as Kathy Docwra recalled, was indeed the typical experience of home life for the post-war family in Ernesettle.

We all had to help do our part you see. Help do the dishes and help peel the veg, help my mum do the ironing. We all had our jobs to do. My sister and I we'd be hoovering. We'd have to hoover all the bedrooms and do downstairs. See you all had your jobs. The boys had to sweep the yard and clean it all up, keep it all nice. Cut the grass at the front. [...] Us girls would have to make the beds and stuff in the mornings. I can remember mum coming home from work and putting the copper on and doing the washing. So the washing would have to go out, probably us girls put the washing out, and bring it in. And I can see my sister ironing quite a lot. And then of course

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<sup>40</sup> Roger Beck, with comments from Rob Fraser. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky and Rob Fraser, 06/03/2011.

<sup>41</sup> Smale, op cit.

when she got older I had to do it. So you all had [to help], it was like a rotation really.<sup>42</sup>

Ordered by age, gender, and seniority, a set of domestic disciplines structured the everyday life of the family through the mutual endeavour of home-making. Through these shared practices, households reproduced a form of social discipline, in the process raising model citizens – citizens whose everyday behaviours were orderly, neighbourly, and self-reliant – and whose actions affirmed the gendered nature of domestic duties, carving up the home into *his* and *hers* territories through which feminine and masculine roles were reproduced and entrenched. These realms, which largely corresponded to interior (feminine) and exterior (masculine) domestic spaces, served to reinforce the sexual division of labour in wider culture, and to dilute the aspiration for housewifely emancipation, replacing the Dudley-era promise of greater leisure with the reality of more domestic work.

Where housing reformers of the 1940s had imagined that greater domestic efficiency would provide housewives with more leisure, in the years that followed the Second World War, instead of diminishing, women's domestic duties actually increased. According to Ann Oakley, average hours of housework recorded weekly rose from 70 in 1950, to 72 in 1951, and 77 by 1971.<sup>43</sup> The diffusion of affluence in the post-war years led, Ruth Schwartz Cowan argues, to higher expectations and higher standards of cleanliness, increasing the amount of work housewives had to do and the level of productivity they were able to achieve.<sup>44</sup> This, as Adrian Forty has observed (and as oral memory in relation to bathing would appear to endorse), was partly a result of new devices and technologies 'rescripting the meaning of cleaning' creating and then sustaining conventions which became difficult to avoid.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, an increase in domestic responsibility also reflected the persistence of social concerns regarding delinquency. As Sheila Rowbotham observes, the reification of the role of mother 'had acquired a conservative

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<sup>42</sup> Kathy Docwra. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky, 22/05/2013.

<sup>43</sup> Ann Oakley. *Housewife*. London: Allen Lane, 1974, p.7.

<sup>44</sup> Ruth Schwartz Cowan. *More Work for Mother. The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*. New York: Basic Books Inc., 1983, p.192.

<sup>45</sup> Adrian Forty. *Objects of Desire: design and society 1750 - 1980*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1986.

twist by the 1950s' feeding feelings of anxiety and inadequacy that 'the mother was thus immensely responsible and immensely to blame if she reared misfits, oddballs or trouble-makers'.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, mothercraft, housewifery, and citizenly responsibilities became intertwined, with the effect that female parity with men's working hours did not materialize as domestic duty monopolised the time available for feminine domestic leisure. The importance and value of home-making was a message perpetuated, not only in the housing guidance produced by local authorities, but also in magazines, advertisements, and media that spoke to much broader audiences. The Good Housekeeping Institute, for example, published a 'Plan of work for a three-bedroomed house' that bound the housewife to a 12 ½ hour working day, with added ironing and silver cleaning in the evenings!<sup>47</sup> Such publications were evidently intended for an affluent readership, but this in itself might give some indication of the attractions of feminine domesticity for the working class wife. Aside from the silverware, the middle class wife's experience of domestic labour was, after 1950, almost identical to that of her working class counterpart, a fact that, for the latter, represented an actual advance in social and cultural status that in itself, had value.

The first generation of Ernesettle housewives were conscious of the social value of running a neat, efficient, and economical home. Bernice Smale spoke with pride of 'being a good manager', Beta Murphy of maintaining an unfaltering daily routine.<sup>48</sup> For the next generation, however, feelings about housework were more ambivalent. Of necessity, larger families were paragons of the type of domestic programmes promoted above, and senior girls in particular were recruited into domestic duty at an early age. As the oldest girl of 11 siblings, Marilyn Luscombe helped her mother for several hours a day, an obligation which seemed excessive by contemporary standards when recalled years later: 'It sounds so funny now! [...] I peeled about ¾ stone of potatoes for our lunch, by the time I finished that it was time for tea!'.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Rowbotham, op cit., p.292.

<sup>47</sup> Cited in Jeremiah, op cit.

<sup>48</sup> Smale op cit.; and Murphy, 2010, op cit.

<sup>49</sup> Marilyn Luscombe, Patricia Luscombe, and Yvonne Luscombe. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky. 03/10/2010.

Figure 3.5.

<i>Plan of work for a three-bedroomed house and a family of husband, wife and one baby of 18 months:</i>		<i>Plan of work for four-bedroomed house with a family of three schoolchildren:</i>	
7 a.m.	Make early tea and give baby drink.	6.45 a.m.	Make early morning tea. Wake children.
7.20	Open house. Dress self and baby. (Husband attends to boiler.)	7.0	Open up house. Draw back curtains, etc. Start preparing breakfast. Husband does solid fuel fire.
7.45	Cook breakfast and serve it.	7.15	Dress self and supervise children.
8.20	Clear away breakfast, wash up.	7.40	Finish preparing breakfast and serve.
8.40	Put baby in pram or play pen. Collect day's washing and put to soak. Make beds. Tidy and dust upstairs, and do daily work in bathroom and lavatory.	8.0	Get family off to school.
9.30	Do daily work downstairs.	8.15	Clear and wash breakfast.
10.15	Do daily wash. Make any necessary preparations for lunch.	8.40	Make beds and do daily work upstairs.
11	Break for tea or coffee. Attend to baby and put him to rest.	9.40	Do daily work downstairs.
11.30	Special work—see below.	10.15	Cooking. Make preparations for evening meal.
12.30	Get lunch.	11.0	Break for tea.
1 p.m.	Lunch with baby. Clear away after lunch, wash up and tidy kitchen.	11.15	Special work (see below).
Afternoon:	Attend to baby, shopping, gardening, mending, etc.	12.30 p.m.	Prepare and eat snack lunch.
4.30	Tea for self and baby.	1.15	Tidy kitchen. Finish off special work.
5.0	Playtime with baby.	Afternoon:	Shopping, mending, ironing, gardening, etc.
5.30	Bath baby and put him to bed.	4	Get tea for self and milk and cake for children on their return from school.
6.15	Prepare and cook supper.	5	Put on evening meal.
7.15	Serve supper.	6	Serve hot meal for whole family.
7.45	Clear and wash up supper dishes with tea things. Lay breakfast.	6.45	Supervise younger children's bedtime.
<i>Special Weekly work:</i>		7.15	Wash up supper dishes. Pack husband's lunch for next day.
Monday	Washing.	<i>Special Work:</i>	
Tuesday	Main bedroom and child's bedroom, alternate weeks.	Monday	Washing.
Wednesday	Bathroom, lavatory, landing and stairs. Spare bedroom when necessary.	Tuesday	Turn out three main bedrooms in rotation. Fourth bedroom when necessary.
Thursday	Sitting-room, and dining-room and hall, alternate weeks.	Wednesday	Turn out sitting-room and dining-room in alternate weeks.
Friday	Kitchen.	Thursday	Bathroom, lavatory, hall and stairs.
Saturday	Extra baking.	Friday	Weekend shopping in morning. Extra cleaning of kitchen in afternoon.
Ironing, silver cleaning, etc., to be fitted in in evenings or afternoons.		Saturday	Extra baking.

The *Good Housekeeping* domestic timetable for a three or four-bedroomed house bound housewives to a 12 ½ hour working day, with extra silver polishing in the evenings! Such publications exposed the relationship between feminine domesticity and social class. For the working-class wife, aspiration extended beyond the silverware, towards the *luxury* of not needing to earn a supplementary income outside the home. In this context, a well-kept home was reflective of social position as well as personal pride, and many husbands, too, believed that supporting a dependent wife was a sign of the successful execution of masculine responsibility. Illustration from 'The Happy Home', *Good Housekeeping* 1954, in David Jeremiah's *Architecture and Design for the Family in Britain*, 2000.

In the Pott household, daughter Pat was conscious that domestic responsibility was unequally distributed.

[I did chores] even when I was very young [age nine-ten in this anecdote]. [...] When I came home, and bear in mind we had a big family, all the dishes were still there waiting for me. I had to wash those dishes every night. Looked after my sisters. [...] I was the oldest girl, I had two older brothers, but I used to always have to do everything. You know, I perhaps couldn't go out unless I cleaned the fire or did something like that. I used to have to. Sounds like I was a little Cinderella, I wasn't. I suppose we all did it then I don't know. But my two youngest sisters didn't, to me they were like spoilt.<sup>50</sup>

Families who failed to teach good domestic discipline were the subject of disdain. This was particularly evident (probably unjustly) in the reputation ascribed to only children, because the distribution of domestic chores to children was necessarily indexed to family size. As an only child, Gloria Oxland recalled that she 'never had to lift a finger', whilst her contemporary, Pat Potts, was almost a 'little Cinderella'. For children like Pat, the senior girl in a family of nine, free time for self-determined leisure was a scarce commodity, sacrificed to the paramount priorities of family and domestic duty. Only children, by contrast, carried their own burden in the form of social marginalisation. Widely believed to be 'spoilt'<sup>51</sup> by the combined advantages of more material possessions and more free time, only children faced the judgement of a society that was institutionally and culturally primed to favour multiple siblings. As writer and BBC producer Adrian Mourby recalled in a recent *Guardian* article:

being an only child in Britain in the 1960s carried a stigma with it. We were other. [...] It was] rather like belonging to a racial minority or religious sect. There was a baby boom going on, but my parents didn't even replace themselves.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Pott, op cit.

<sup>51</sup> Both Pat and Gloria used this term: Gloria to describe, cautiously, herself 'I was spoilt, I suppose', Pat to describe her younger sisters, who, by comparison with herself, did much less housework and childcare.

<sup>52</sup> Adrian Mourby. 'It wasn't much fun being an only child in the 60s'. *The Weekend Guardian, Family section*, November, 2014.

## 'I never used to go in town' – neighbourhood and gendered geographies

The pressure of feminine domestic responsibility combined with a geographic peripherality to create a divergence in male and female mobility. Whilst many women saw no incompatibility between a domestic role and female equality, gender differences that correlated to work/home binaries did have spatial and social consequences. The reconfiguration of the city into *commercial* and *dwelling* zones curtailed women's spatial freedom, and granted legitimacy to masculine claims on the social and politic culture of the urban centre. Yet, in consequence, the place-based identity of the neighbourhood would take on a character that was shaped by the everyday routine of women and children.

In the new neighbourhoods, separation from the city centre served to focus daily life on domesticity and leisure, but this was experienced differently across the genders. Most men worked outside the neighbourhood and travelled beyond Ernesettle on a daily basis, but with female mobility restricted by childcare, women ventured into town less frequently. As a consequence, Ernesettle's relative remoteness gave rise to a place-specific local culture that included a thriving street life, and an enterprising culture of clubs and craft that was anchored to feminine experience. Such practices both served and critiqued domesticity, providing opportunities for contributing to the family economy that were at once outside and within the domestic ideal.

To the new residents of the late 1940s and early 1950s, the new neighbourhood, on requisitioned farmland, was *in the country*. Graham Nicholas moved to Ernesettle from the city centre when he was four years old and was struck by how distant the new estate seemed from Plymouth, a sense compounded by the slowness of public transport and the first gear grind of the bus: 'It took about an hour [to go into town...] 'cause the buses were so slow. You could walk quicker up St Budeaux Hill!<sup>53</sup> For some the isolation of the new neighbourhood came as a culture shock. After a few years in Rochford Crescent, Graham's mother requested a transfer back to the city centre and the family were housed in a flat on Union Street – Plymouth's busiest nightlife area. For six-year old Graham, the contrast was stark: from a

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<sup>53</sup> Graham Nicholas. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky, 04/08/2012.

life of sunny summers spent in fields and woods, to that of spectator of the fights and scuffles that would erupt on the street: 'it was an eye opener [...] I remember somebody being chucked through the window of a pub, from inside out!<sup>54</sup> Although the family would later return to Ernesettle, Mrs Nicholas' initial inability to settle indicates the difficulty in adjusting to the dramatic differences in culture that a move to the suburbs brought. There were other stories of new tenants who could not adjust; Bernice Smale, 'had some [neighbours] from the Barbican<sup>55</sup>: They didn't stay long – they didn't like it, they loved the Barbican and they wanted to go back', or the original tenants of Mr and Mrs Ashton's house on the Green who also only lasted a couple of years before requesting a house swap that saw them move out to a pre-fab in Honicknowle.<sup>56</sup> That Graham Nicholas attributed the decision to move back to central Plymouth to his mother is telling. The experience of mobility beyond the neighbourhood was differentiated by gender: men were more likely to work outside of Ernesettle and thus travelled elsewhere daily, whilst women, if they worked, did so locally in one of Ernesettle's several factories or combined part-time work with housewifery. For Ernesettle women, access to the city centre became limited by travel time, and cost: as Bernice Smale recalled 'we didn't go into town or shop very often because we couldn't afford the bus fares anyway!<sup>57</sup>

Limited financial resources often confined women to the immediate locality, a fact which underscored their domestic obligations, but this did not have to correspond to isolation within the home. The role of housewife could be shaped to include small enterprise and craft, long walks in the surrounding countryside, or the fellowship of clubs and informal neighbourly sociability. Domesticity, sociability, earning, and pleasure could be complementary. Mrs Murphy recalled '[w]e used to walk for hours', long walks around the creek serving to tire the children before bedtime, and occupying the family whilst Mr Murphy was at work.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> The Barbican is Plymouth's fishing harbour and home to many of the city's oldest buildings, with several Tudor houses still intact. One of the most densely populated areas of the city before the war, it was home to a close-knit working-class community including many men and women employed in the fishing industry and related services.

<sup>56</sup> Smale, op cit.; and Ashton and Ashton, op cit.

<sup>57</sup> Nicolas, op cit.

'Cause my husband worked down Brown and Sharps and he used to work a lot of overtime, and while he was working overtime we were walking all through the woods and all around, always the same journey, right down around the river and right through the woods and up around and come back in and then they were ready for bed.<sup>58</sup>

Mrs Murphy's relative autonomy to enjoy Ernesettle rambles, while her husband worked overtime at the Brown and Sharp factory (which lies within the loop of the walk described), serves as a reminder that in the post-war neighbourhood housewifely domesticity offered certain temporal freedoms even whilst it imposed geographic limitations. Whilst they had more time to enjoy the landscape on their doorstep, women's access to the more commercially and culturally oriented life of the city centre was restricted. This exchange between Malcolm and Jackie Ward captures what was a common difference in gendered experience.

Malcolm: See I can remember a lot of the [old pre-war town]. That pub there, Kitty's, that was the Abbey, we used to go in there Thursday dinner times when we signed on in the merch. Instead of signing on in the dole, we went in the merchant navy place. And then went down, all met down the Abbey, had a few pints.

Jackie: You were lucky, I never used to go in town. It was a treat to go in town when I was young.

Malcolm: oh I loved town.

Jackie: You used to go in town maybe once a year like at a special time. Like Whitsun, we used to go get our new set of clothes, and things like that, so town was... erm, never knew much about it.<sup>59</sup>

Whilst young men like Malcolm were attracted to the nightlife of the city centre, for many women the demands of domestic life, its geographic and financial limitations, meant that a trip to town became something of an occasion. The city centre was therefore associated with consumer pleasures, particularly related to the purchase of clothing. Two parallel paths in the adoption of consumerism appear in oral memory with income the determining factor in the course that families or individuals chose to follow. There were those who, of necessity, had to make the best of their own skills and the resources of the neighbourhood, and those whose good fortune gave them privileged access to the consumer culture of the city centre. For the likes of Jackie Ward, an excursion into town was an annual event, the occasion of buying a 'Whitsun set of clothes'. In contrast, only child Gloria Toms (nee

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<sup>58</sup> Murphy, 2010, op cit.

<sup>59</sup> Ward and Ward, op cit.



Oxland) 'always went in town', where her parents had many opportunities to spend the surplus of their combined incomes on family treats.

I used to have my hair done in Finches in town. [...] And we used to have our photos taken in Jerome, which was up above Woolworths [...] My mum and dad always took me into town anyway, we'd go in Sellecks [restaurant] was it? Go in there a lot, and do things like that. It was all new, wasn't it? The shops then. And I've got a photo [taken in town] and I'm outside this market, and I've got erm, well it must've been a lovely coat, like a herringbone coat on and a little hat and real fur flippin' gloves like you know!<sup>60</sup>

'Going to town' became an index of family income and the ability to consume the goods and services the city had to offer. Families with dual incomes and fewer children were inevitably more mobile in this respect. As Sharon Zukin has observed of the comparative social geographies of American neighbourhoods of the early–mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, entry to a 'fairylane of diversity and display' that comprised the shopping districts of US downtown, was a bourgeois privilege that elaborated hierarchies of racial, social and gender stratification.<sup>61</sup> Regular access to the new shops in Plymouth's city centre, and the goods they contained, signified an alignment along more affluent social strata to which many in 1950s austerity Britain fervently aspired. Symbolic of the new consumerism is the mass excitement surrounding the opening of Plymouth's new Dingles department store. On 1<sup>st</sup> September 1951 *The Western Evening Herald* reported that an all-female crowd queued for the opening. As well as being the first department store to be built in Britain since 1939, it also boasted the first escalator ever seen in the West Country.

[T]he queue stretched from Royal Parade along Armada Way... and round the corner into New George Street, where another throng was waiting for the doors of the up-to-date food hall to open... there was a rush for the nylons counter... The escalator carried a continuous procession of people, many of whom laughed at their novel experience... The new lifts were also greatly in demand... One woman said: "It is a palace – the crystal palace".<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Sheila Browning, Gloria Toms (nee Oxland), with comments from Rob Fraser. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky and Rob Fraser, 28/04/2011.

<sup>61</sup> Sharon Zukin. 'A Child's Cartography'. In *The Consumer Society Reader*, by Martyn, J. Lee (ed.): 204-216. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, p.206.

<sup>62</sup> Anon. *Western Evening Herald*. 01/09/1951.

Figure 3.6.



Post-war reconstruction created functional and gendered geographies. The reconfiguration of the city into 'commercial' and 'dwelling' zones, amplified the spectacular nature of consumerism in the centre, whilst the peripheral neighbourhoods took on a character that was shaped by the everyday routine of women and children. The centre became a destination to visit on special occasions, and shop-bought clothes an aspirational luxury for a generation of children dressed in clothes made by with love mothers, aunts, and grannies. Photographs by Chris Gullet Studio depicting Dingles Department Store, Armada Way, Plymouth city centre, in coronation year 1953 (author's own collection).

Whilst access to the 'central affluent space of the city' was structured to favour the well-to-do, neighbourhood shopping streets developed their own small cultures of insularity: 'coherent social spaces of gender and class that produced both difference and continuity'.<sup>63</sup> For those who lacked the resources to participate in the shopping culture of the city, the new neighbourhood prompted enterprising economic activity, and self-sufficiency through home-production. Countering the city-centric consumer culture, distinctly working-class practices of making and making-do mapped onto the geography of the peripheral estate. De-limited by walking distance, this was typified by the 'wool club round' initiated by Alison Train's mother, Claire.

Mother used to do a wool club round. She used to go round and knock on doors, and if anybody wanted any wool to knit anything – knit swimming costumes you know that fell off when it got wet! - [she would supply it.] [...Mother] was a knitter and her sister was a dressmaker. I can always remember being dressed in made clothes, and I just longed for something to be bought!<sup>64</sup>

Handcraft, such as knitting, could positively benefit the family finances, produce varied opportunities for social contact, demonstrate and reinforce commitment to family, and produce a sense of personal achievement. As Alison Train remembered, running a wool club gave her housewife mother a reason for visiting women locally, supplying a local consumer demand, and earning a little extra income. These small, everyday practices created micro communities of shared interest and economy: the club could access discounted wholesale prices; it could share patterns and skills, and foster social encounters within the potentially isolating day-to-day routine of housewifery. However, despite the positive benefits of handmade clothes, as a child, Alison was conscious of missing out on 'something bought'. Shop-bought clothes were valued as status symbols and for the exciting experience of an excursion into town to make a department store purchase. As consumer goods became more accessible through growing affluence in the 1950s and 60s, the consequential visual cues of relative financial resources: the knitted swimming costume, or the shop-bought gloves, produced a subtle lexicon of relative wealth that was unconsciously understood by children such as Alison and Gloria, forging aspirations that fuelled the expansion of the consumer economy as they grew to adulthood.

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<sup>63</sup> Zukin, op cit., p.205.

<sup>64</sup> Alison Train, op cit.

The desire to consume grew exponentially throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, amplified and encouraged by the visual stimulus of popular magazines and television, the post-war home became the canvas on which to express a new consumer identity. As important to the national economy with its virtuous cycle of production, taxation, and social welfare, as it was to the facilitation of private profits, consumerism had a vital part to play in the mechanics of social government. In the early years, however, this remained a dream yet to be realised. For most, shopping was more a matter of family provisioning than of personal gratification, an activity more likely to take place across that doorstep than across the glass-topped counters of Dingles.

### **'Almost one of the family' – traders and street life**

If, in the early years at least, some Ernesettlers could not get to the shops, the shops could come to Ernesettle: a legion of small tradesmen found in the new estates a captive market hungry for their wares. In oral memory a thriving street life is described, populated by a regular cast of characters who traded goods from vans, delivered to order, or provided financial services including savings clubs and insurance. Some, like Mrs Murphy's grocer (see page 129), hailed from other parts of Plymouth and developed mobile services in response to the movement of their customers to the new estate, eager to sustain their trade and corner new markets.<sup>65</sup> Bernice Smale's butcher was one such trader amongst many.

My butcher, when he learned I was coming out, started to bring out his little van with his butcher's stuff and you could buy your meat. And then you had your green grocer came round, and there were other sorts of people that came out with stuff. So I mean to say we never went without anything, it was all there.<sup>66</sup>

Residents developed long-standing relationships of trust and respect with these traders (note the possessive adjectives: 'my butcher', 'your green grocer'), they became, in Roger Beck's words 'almost one of the family'.<sup>67</sup> Men who made their rounds daily became known by their first names, whilst weekly visitors went by the name of their business or family name. These familiar faces and vans were as much a part of the shared experience and collective memory of the neighbourhood as its landscape features and

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<sup>65</sup> Murphy, 2010, op cit.

<sup>66</sup> Smale, op cit.

<sup>67</sup> Beck and Fraser, op cit.

buildings. Street life was a key part of the fabric of social reproduction, with traders integral to a shared local culture. The life of the street developed its own rhythms, with regular visits which marked the days of the week: rent on a Monday, coal on a Tuesday, fish and chips, the Provident lady on a Friday, and Anstey's vegetables and the pasty man on a Saturday. Other traders reflected the weather or the seasons: Demella's ice cream in the summer; and fresh fish when tides permitted. The strength of social ties to these traders was remembered by many including Roger Beck, who explained that they were a constant presence throughout childhood and growing up.

These men who would be with you for years and years, almost became one of the family: they came in for cups of tea, always wanted to know what you were doing as you grew up. In fact the Co-op milkman [...] Tom was on the estate for years and years and years. I think there was a bit of a party when he actually left. There were also a couple of insurance men, a coal man, a grocer. You'd get the same ice cream man for years and years... all my growing up there was the same ice cream man coming round all the time. Oh they were absolutely known on the estate for years.<sup>68</sup>

Alongside the mobile merchants there were also people in public employment (Local Authority, NHS, Police), most of whom also lived in Ernesettle. These included the rent men, Fred Train and Mr Haines, the park keeper, Mr Trollope, the Policeman, Constable Foden on his beat, Sister Beckett the midwife and Dr. James on their rounds, and a more anonymous cohort of municipal gardeners who were regularly seen out and about. Nye Bevan's vision of the local 'doctor residing benignly with his patients in the same street' had almost come to pass, but only in so far as the state was able to engineer a social mix from its own human resources.<sup>69</sup> A handful of employees from the new 'comprador class' of social government – public sector personnel such as the rent man, NHS doctor and nurses, policemen, and so on – lived in Ernesettle, but a true mix which included private sector professionals such as solicitors and bankers was not achieved.<sup>70</sup> Outside of Plymouth's post-war estates, the middle classes continued to follow well-trodden paths to their own exclusive territories, whilst Ernesettle and its sister estates developed a unique culture of their own.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Bevan, cited in Thompson and Tiratsoo, op cit., p.104.

<sup>70</sup> Ross, op cit.

Figure 3.7.



The Co-operative Society, a powerful organisation in the political and social history of 20<sup>th</sup> century Plymouth, was allocated many of the first shops to serve the new estates. Prior to the construction of permanent shops, the Ernesettle Co-op was housed in a Cornish Unit on Rochford Crescent. Its significance is commemorated in this watercolour by Rowland Hilder, one of the most sought-after commercial artists of the era whose works included wartime propaganda posters and Shell travel guides. Image courtesy of Plymouth City Museum, ref. EIR000966.

This unique culture was to acquire, in the early years, a predominantly feminine character. With most men at work elsewhere, the weekday life of the estate was monopolised by women and children, with permanent shops, when they were completed in 1952, becoming an important focus for social life and for collective memory. Roger Beck recalled that 'one of the features of the estate was, certainly in my mother's case, she went to the shops almost every day [...] the shops were a kind of socialising place' for housewives.<sup>71</sup> The *village centre*, provided by Ernesettle's permanent shopping parade, comprised a total of 16 lettable units arranged in two terraces facing Hornchurch Road, with a single-storey terrace of smaller lock-up shops in the lane behind. These included: a Post Office, two butchers (the Co-op and Dewhurst's), two newsagents (Wilsden's and French's), a cobbler, a fish and chip shop, the Co-op grocery, a chemist, and for varying periods of time, a wool shop (Holman's, later Gidley's), Stephen's cake shop, and Martins Bank. Within the national context of post-war developments this may have been an unusually generous shopping provision – Ravetz, for instance, reports that '[e]states did not [...] develop their own commercial centres and industries. The provision of shops [...] was usually limited to four or five basic foods and a tobacconist-newsagent'.<sup>72</sup>

Food shopping was a daily activity in most households, primarily the responsibility of the mother, with children sent on errands for forgotten or smaller items as required. Women quickly became familiar with the shopkeepers, most, like the Co-op butcher, referred to by name (Mr Dawson). This daily use made the shops an important site of social interaction, but also a gendered space. In the early days then, neighbourhood social life revolved around women and their patterns of daily life. Whether provisioning at the local shops, interacting with traders on the doorstep, or co-ordinating their own associations such as the wool club, women's lives were central to the social character that the estate developed. The animation that street life fostered as a result of these patterns of occupation was also conducive to children's freedom, and they too became an integral part of the public life of the neighbourhood. A climate of shared, unobtrusive supervision developed

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<sup>71</sup> Beck and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>72</sup> Ravetz, op cit., p.179.

Figure 3.8.



Ernesettle shops were a meeting place for mothers and the site of daily social interaction. Top: the lower shopping parade with flats above, mothers with prams and toddlers congregating at the grocery at Hornchurch Road, 1962. Photograph courtesy of PWDRO, ref. 1550/9.

The strength of social ties forged through the shops is demonstrated by displays of local feeling when shopkeepers retired. Below: the Frenches' (left) and Wilsdens' (right) retirements – both long-serving newsagents. The Frenches (grandparents of Dawn French) ran a shop in Hornchurch Lane, just a few yards away from the Wilsden's shop in the upper parade. Photographs courtesy of Marilyn Luscombe (left) and Pat Pott (right), both of whom delivered newspapers to Ernesettle for the Frenches and Wilsdens respectively.





in which free-ranging child's play flourished, co-opting the whole community into a culture of surveillance and discipline.

### **'We wouldn't be back 'til teatime' – childhood freedoms and territories**

Favoured with more free time than any other age group, it was children who experienced the greatest mobility across the local landscape, in the process becoming the future anchors of a local, place-based identity. Their freedom was vividly remembered by the oral history participants who spent their childhood years in Ernesettle, with the rural environment offering an abundance of opportunities to explore and discover. It was a window on the cyclical rhythms of the seasons not unlike the country education that Bonham-Carter and others so earnestly advocated. Alison Train recalled that,

[a]t nine or ten years old I can remember getting a load of children half a dozen or so, and we'd walk from here, right the way through the woods, right the way up Millford Lane, right the way out to Lopwell Dam<sup>73</sup>. And then we'd, there were daffodils up in the [fields], we'd pick daffodils on the way home or whatever, for mum or whatever. But we'd go out like 9 o'clock in the morning, and we wouldn't be back 'til teatime.<sup>74</sup>

Populated by traders, rent collectors, gardeners, housewives, changing shift workers, and, of course, children, Ernesettle's animated streets sheltered a form of communal surveillance that shares commonalities with what David Lancy, in his comparative anthropology of childhood, identifies as the 'mother ground' of non-Western societies. In this 'open area in village or garden children of all ages gather to play under the watchful eye of adults working or relaxing nearby'.<sup>75</sup> It is system of shared responsibility that Lancy also encountered in remembered childhoods in more remote corners of the USA where '[c]hildren's escapades throughout the town were observed by many eyes [their ...] free-ranging play [...] drew multiple other adults into the role of audience'.<sup>76</sup> The range of childhood mobility in Ernesettle was far more expansive than the 'mother ground' or town Lancy describes. The ten-mile ramble recalled by Alison Train, or to 'just push off over the fields' all day, as

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<sup>73</sup> The distance from Ernesettle to Lopwell Dam is approximately five miles through lanes and woodland, a ten mile round trip in total unaccompanied by an adult.

<sup>74</sup> Alison Train, op cit.

<sup>75</sup> David, F. Lancy. *The Anthropology of Childhood. Cherubs, Chattel, Changelings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p.131.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p.132.

Roger Beck did, took young children beyond the bounds of the surveillance of the neighbourhood.<sup>77</sup> As Roger explained, adult attitudes to childhood independence were relaxed by today's standards – 'you just disappeared and providing you were there for meals, you know, you were ok really'.<sup>78</sup> These memories, that could have been lifted directly from the pages of *The Famous Five*, suggest that the powerful literary and cultural constructions of rural geographies as safe and healthy spaces for children (see page 89) helped to create a permissive adult attitude to play, both in terms of time and space, producing an extremely wide-ranging childhood mobility. Children's freedom also helped to alleviate the pressures of feminine responsibility, giving hard-pressed mothers time to attend to younger siblings, care for the home, or take paid work, unhampered by the pestering of older kids.

Whilst childhood mobility was wide-ranging, this spatial freedom was accompanied by a culture of discipline and punishment that was, by modern standards, quite severe. Adults were co-opted into a supervisory role that carried an unspoken expectation that they should report misbehaviour or exert discipline for the communal benefit. Children, for their part, were taught to treat adults with unquestioning deference as Sheila Browning recalled, 'if an adult told you to do something, you did it!'<sup>79</sup> Deference to adults was reinforced by a formal mode of address that maintained a respectful distance and precluded the development of over-familiarity. Jean Darby, for instance, spoke of still calling her best friend's mother 'Mrs White' even today, explaining 'that's how you spoke to people'.<sup>80</sup> Children who misbehaved were reported to their parents, and it was expected that corrective discipline would be applied within the home. Many parents took this responsibility seriously: to have raised a delinquent child not only reflected badly on parental skills (especially mothercraft), it also demonstrated a neglect of one's obligation to neighbours to protect the quality and tranquillity of the local environment – a duty that was clearly underlined in the tenant's handbook.<sup>81</sup> As Dennis Murphy explained:

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<sup>77</sup> Alison Train, op cit.; and Beck and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>78</sup> Beck and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>79</sup> Browning, Toms (nee Oxland), and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>80</sup> Jean Darby (nee Harrison). Interview by Hilary Kolinsky & Rob Fraser, 13/04/2010.

<sup>81</sup> Plymouth Corporation, *My House: My Home*, op cit., p.9.

[father] didn't like anything coming back about his kids. If you were naughty and got caught out mind [you] suffered the consequences. Out came that bloody leather belt. Bloody hell! Oh he knew how to use that!"<sup>82</sup>

With their highly visible public presence, children were ambassadors for family respectability and were expected to behave accordingly. Although the nature of punishment varied from family to family, it was not uncommon for children to receive a beating for small instances of cheekiness or impertinence. Disciplinary responsibility generally fell to 'father': Pat Sterry's dad, for example, 'was very strict, he used to cane us on the slightest little thing' and Andy Strike's father 'punched me, knocked me right over the settee [...for] being a bit cocky'.<sup>83</sup> Physical discipline in the home was mirrored by corporal punishment at school, at both primary and secondary levels. Many children felt the cane applied by Mr Allen, Headmaster of Biggin Hill Primary School, who, by all accounts, cut a slightly sinister figure, stalking the corridors smoking his pipe. This was the darker side of childhood freedoms, sometimes coming at the cost of relations between children and parents, or husbands and wives when the social license to enforce physical punishment within the home went too far. Several of the oral history participants still nursed grievances over the injustice of one-off, or in some cases, repeated instances of parental physical violence. Whilst there appears to have been collective participation in the policing of behaviour within the neighbourhood, there existed a simultaneous sense of the impenetrability of the private domain of the home. As Pat Sterry recalled, despite the evidence in her case of what might today constitute abuse, 'back in those days, even teachers ignored it. It was nothing ever said or done about it'.<sup>84</sup>

As other chapters will explore in more detail, the disciplinary code of the neighbourhood also had an economic dimension. It was not uncommon for children to be looked after by unrelated neighbours for several hours a day, especially if both their parents worked, and in these conditions of dependency, as Lancy has observed, 'a parent [...] certainly wouldn't want to broadcast the

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<sup>82</sup> Dennis Murphy and Pete Murphy. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky, 09/05/2013.

<sup>83</sup> Pat Sterry. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky and Rob Fraser, 27/06/2013; and Andy Strike. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky, 02/05/2013.

<sup>84</sup> Sterry, op cit.,

fact that their child [wa]s unmanageable'.<sup>85</sup> Thus, visibly disciplining children for misbehaviour was necessary to sustain the cooperation of neighbours in child supervision, which was in some cases vital to the maintenance of the household economy. Under these circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that, as Jean Darlby recalled, 'most children were quite well behaved'.<sup>86</sup>

### **'The best house on the estate' – masculine home-making and its endorsement**

Children were inculcated into the domestic discipline of home-making at an early age, sharing in the cleaning, cooking, caring, and maintenance obligations exhibited by the *creditable* family. As we have seen, home-making obligations were not necessarily evenly distributed, and their allocation elaborated hierarchies of gender. These corresponded with public and private spatial domains: women and girls took on most of the work of the interior, whilst the *place* of masculine domestic duty was more likely to be out of doors. Gardens were also divided by gender with women occupying front gardens as their social realm, and men taking possession of the back for their hobbies. As Beta Murphy explained: 'the front garden was mine, [...] but the back garden, right up to the fence, he would cultivate it'.<sup>87</sup> The threshold between public social relations and private domestic ones, the front garden was also an intermediate ground between the communal space of the neighbourhood and the private family home. Many people recalled women talking on the doorsteps for hours, an observation which records not just the social life of the street, but also the sacredness of the interior. Neighbours were intuitively respectful of this boundary. Beta Murphy, for example, was still friendly with a neighbour in Croydon Gardens after 60 years 'but we never went serious you know what I mean?'<sup>88</sup> [It was] just over the garden gate sort of business'. Neighbours, as described below by Jean Darlby, 'didn't seem to go in', no matter how well they knew each other.

They used to talk on the doorsteps for hours. Mum didn't go in anyone's house very often. She didn't go in next door very often but she knew them very well. Yeah she got on with a lot of people like you

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<sup>85</sup> Lancy, *op cit.*, p.180.

<sup>86</sup> Darlby, *op cit.*

<sup>87</sup> Murphy, 2010, *op cit.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

know. But they didn't seem to go in. They used to bring a cup of tea outside like in the summer.<sup>89</sup>

The front garden then, served as a buffer, providing a physical line of defence between one's own and others lives, and a neutral territory for social exchange. Guidance on how to manage the garden actively reinforced these notions of public and private domain. Whilst the back garden was envisaged as a space of constructive leisure and food production, the front was for the collective visual enhancement of the neighbourhood. The tenant's handbook recommended hedges for the back garden 'to give it shelter and privacy', but specifically deterred the privatisation of front gardens: 'homes look more neighbourly when the front gardens can be seen and admired by all'.<sup>90</sup> At the front, an appearance of *homeliness* was an important goal: flower planting was suggested to make the front door 'cheerful and welcoming'; and low shrubberies advocated to 'make houses look more cosy and comfortable'.<sup>91</sup> Here, tenants were encouraged to make their mark (albeit in a tidy and correct manner), supplementing orderly architecture with 'neat, well-planted gardens'. To further underscore the message of gardening for communal benefit, the tenant's handbook appealed to the spirit of nationalism, foregrounding collective, rather than individual, pride.

We all like to feel that our country compares favourably with others, that our city attracts visitors, arousing their admiration, and that our own estate is noted for its trees and gardens. Ultimately, this result depends on the appearance of each individual home – on the condition of its garden; and although much depends on the architecture, neat well-planted gardens make all the difference to most houses, so really "it all depends on you".<sup>92</sup>

The efforts of the tenant's handbook to activate a citizenly approach to gardening were reinforced by the annual gardening competition, organised by the Plymouth Corporation. Early in the estate's development, the local authority had recognised the need to incentivize gardening, arranging the competition with the explicit aim 'to encourage tenants to produce as much food as possible'.<sup>93</sup> Building firms involved in construction were charged with sponsoring the first competition prizes, and judges from the Plymouth and

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<sup>89</sup> Darlby, op cit.

<sup>90</sup> Plymouth Corporation. *Your House Your Home*, p.39.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, p.39.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p.39.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p.45.

District Gardens and Allotment Association would visit entrant's properties to assess their design and cultivation skills. The local garden show, with its categories for raw produce, baking and preserving, also offered an opportunity for the social endorsement of domestic skills, and in the process, it visibly distilled the sexual division of domestic labour. Whilst the men competed over who could grow the biggest marrow, women, as Clare Train explained 'used to bake cakes, [...] make jam and things'.<sup>94</sup> It is evident that gardening skills quickly became widespread: aerial photographs taken in the mid 1950s show a large percentage of gardens cultivated for vegetable growing, a pastime that reactivated a culture of self-sufficiency that had been presented as a patriotic duty in wartime.

Gardening spoke to a widespread masculine desire to be a provider, whilst offering an outlet for leisure time and self-expression that centred on family. It also gave men a space to call their own. As we have seen, the domestic interior was both produced by, and represented as, a female domain – the assumption that it *belonged* to the housewife going unchallenged across contemporary literature. Whilst men, of course, had compensatory dominion in the workplace, their influence was more marginal at home. As activities with a 'distinctly masculine style', Steven Gelber argues, gardening and DIY were two domestic occupations which gave 'the justification for men to claim a portion of their homes as a workshop for themselves'.<sup>95</sup> Whether in their sheds, or on their vegetable plots, men claimed 'a part of the house and apart from it, sharing the home with their families while retaining spatial and functional autonomy'.<sup>96</sup> The fervour with which some men adopted their domestic *responsibilities* could sometimes be resented. In the Smale household Bernice so begrudged her husband's lifelong fanatical insistence on growing and freezing garden produce that 'when he died, I could not wait, I got rid of the big freezer, I chopped [the vegetable plot] down and I made it into a load of stones and things!'<sup>97</sup>

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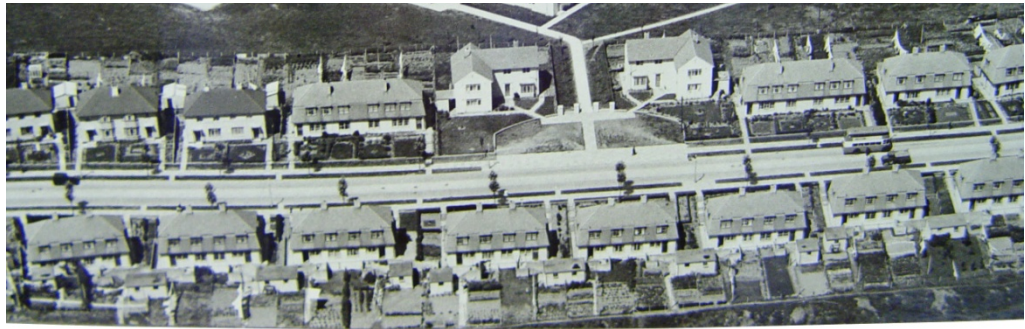
<sup>94</sup> Claire Train. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky and Rob Fraser, 12/02/2010.

<sup>95</sup> Steven, M. Gelber. 'Do-It-Yourself: Constructing, Repairing and Maintaining Domestic Masculinity'. *American Quarterly* (The American Studies Association) 49, no. 1 (1997): 66-112, p.68.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p69.

<sup>97</sup> Smale, op cit.

Figure 3.9.



A culture of self-sufficiency that drew on the gardening practices of the wartime 'Dig for Victory' campaign and a working-class tradition of allotment keeping, was assimilated into domestic life on the post-war council estate through gardening competitions promoted by the local authority. This culture remained active well into the 1980s.

Top, houses on Hornchurch Road, Ernesettle, with gardens laid out for vegetable growing, c. 1953. Photograph courtesy of PWDRO, ref. PCC/76/5/1293



Left, judging at the Ernesettle gardening competition in St Aidan's Church Hall, c. 1980. Photographs courtesy of South West Image Bank, *Western Morning News* collection, refs. WMN-2-2-5802-1, and WMN-2-2-5802-1.

At the Luscombes' too, there was occasional frustration when husband Al spent *all* his free time in the garden, as his wife Pat remembered.

He was so proud of his garden and he did a good job. [...] He'd spend some hours up the garden. [I'd call out] "Al, your tea's ready. On the table". "Be in in a minute maid" [he'd reply]. [But] it'd be cold [by the time he came in] I had to put it in and out the oven!<sup>98</sup>

Nevertheless, for the working class family self-sufficiency in food-production was, as the tenant's handbook noted, 'a great assistance in balancing the family budget', and an important masculine contribution to the household economy.<sup>99</sup> Al Luscombe's produce was vital to feeding a family of 13, and even Bernice Smale conceded that all the veg 'was lovely when the children were small'<sup>100</sup>. Masculine domesticity was, however, creative as well as productive. As Joanna Bourke has noted, 'men maintained standards of beauty, they enjoyed the touch of plants and wood, their domestic work symbolically affirmed their manly role as "providers"'.<sup>101</sup> Garden sheds expanded the possibilities of masculine activity, which included for the oral history sample, the popular hobbies of budgerigar breeding, as well as model-making, poultry keeping, and woodwork. Of course, some men had no interest in gardening or hobbies. Roger Beck acknowledged his father's *failure* in this respect:

in my father's case, only if mother wanted him to do something in the house would he have recourse to the garden! In order possibly to avoid any decoration or anything in the house!<sup>102</sup>

However, the extent to which dominant constructions of gender prevailed in Ernesettle life is evident in Roger's recollection of how this family deficiency was made good by a neighbour:

So [father] didn't sort of have a shed and repair things or anything. So it was left to the man next door to make me things. The original neighbours next door they had three daughters so he couldn't make them cricket bats and things to ride on and things, so he used to make them for me which suited me quite well. But that was the sort of thing which used to happen in those days between people who were living close together, you were on that kind of [terms].<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Luscombe, Luscombe, and Luscombe, op cit.

<sup>99</sup> Plymouth Corporation. *Your House Your Home*, p.39.

<sup>100</sup> Smale, op cit.

<sup>101</sup> Joanna Bourke. *Working-class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960*. London: Routledge, 1994, p.89.

<sup>102</sup> Beck and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.



The long-term legacy of masculine and feminine roles is indicated by the glimpse Roger offers into a neighbour's household where 'cricket bats and things to ride on' were not deemed suitable gifts for female children. Whilst boys were socialised by team games and go-cart thrills, girls, we presume, were helping mother with the housework! Yet, as Bourke noted, the gendering of domestic duties did not preclude creativity in the male domain. In the Harrison household, both artistic talents and productive skills were a source of pride and esteem. As 'the best on the estate', Jean Harrison's (nee Darby) garden marked an apex of good domestic citizenship – the perfect balance of public display, private space for play, and productive planting:

[Dad] built a little wall all the way down the steps, and we had a beautiful garden. He, there was crazy paving and all that.[...] And Dad did it beautifully, absolutely beautifully. And all down the side of the house, along the bottom and up. And we had a greenhouse. And we grew everything. Dad grew everything. And we had an allotment. At the back of the dining room he concreted a big piece for us, that was our playground. And we had a massive shed, outside shed with a toilet in. And behind that he did a big load of grass there for us. My sisters used to put a tent up there. I found a photo the other day of her with her tent! And all the rest was vegetables at the back. Everything with the greenhouse and that. And all the front was crazy paving, and he did slopes and steps and bird baths. And he did a centre section, it was brick and all that, grass, it was beautiful. And the rent man, Mr Train, he said 'you've got the best house on the estate.' He always said that.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Darby, op cit.

Figure 3.10.



An apex of good domestic citizenship, the Harrison's garden – 'the best on the estate', according to rent man Fred Train. It exemplified what could be achieved when husbands, wives, and children took a mutual pride in the shared project of home-making. Jean and Carol Harrison in the front garden at 77 Hornchurch Road in 1957 (top), and 1958 (below). Photographs courtesy of Jean Darlby.

## **'In the summer it used to be packed' – place and collective memory**

The combined forces of domestic pride, a pioneering psychology, the sociability of the street, geographic isolation, and childhood freedom to explore, all consolidated over time into a consciously articulated sense of local identity. The forging of a collective character, an Ernesettle ethos if you like, proceeded gradually. Born of economic and spatial peripherality it was the compound sum of many small effects. Although, in the early years, economic resources may have been in relatively short supply, there was a compensating resourcefulness in use of the free assets of the neighbouring landscape, and of making and making do. Scarcity created a local culture that was experientially rich, if financially poor, and a corresponding sense of identity that was closely allied to place and economic capacity, and anchored by the experience of women and children in particular. This characteristic local structure of feeling was constituted through what Bourdieu has labelled the 'taste of the necessary', less a class consciousness in an ideological sense, but rather a shared experience born of (relatively) similar material circumstances.<sup>105</sup> There was also an environmental component to the Ernesettle identity, generated by its landmarks, buildings, and communal spaces. As Giles and Middleton have observed, 'the places in which the micro episodes of our lives occur are part and parcel of the structure of feeling of a particular locale and therefore central to any reading of the constructions of identity'.<sup>106</sup> It is against the physical backdrop of the landscape that Ernesettle's residents recalled the significant milestones of courtship, marriage, births, and deaths, as well as the mundane detail of everyday life.

A recurring theme in the collective memory of Ernesettle was the participation in practices that were either beyond financial measurement, or comprised of slower, cheaper, and less spectacular forms of market participation such as craft. Practices which leveraged the free resources of the neighbourhood (creek swimming, scrumping<sup>107</sup>, or fishing) were imbued with high social value, their incidental natural abundance was exploited and appreciated to the full.

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<sup>105</sup> Bourdieu, op cit.

<sup>106</sup> Judy, Giles and Tim Middleton. *Studying Culture*. 2008. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.

<sup>107</sup> 'Scrumping' is taking apples from commercial orchards, of which there were once many in the Tamar Valley where Ernesettle is located.

Rites of passage invented by the neighbourhood children initiated youngsters into this local culture, often in ways that were slightly transgressive and dangerous in their nature. Two predominant childhood rituals were running the gauntlet of Black Bridge and scrumping apples – the former essential to the accomplishment of the latter. As Alison Sargent explained, scrumping was a passport to membership of the neighbourhood: 'If you'd not got caught scrumping apples by the farmer you weren't Ernesettle resident really!'<sup>108</sup>

For the first generation of children, raised in a culture in which physical punishment was an ever-present threat, the possibility of being caught by the farmer, or worse, reported to your father, intensified the danger of crossing the railway bridge. As Pat Sterry recalled:

we'd even cross the bridge down the creek on many occasions and gone scrumping apples over across, but you could guarantee somebody would see you and tell your father! Couldn't always get away with it!<sup>109</sup>

If the threat of being caught was not enough to manufacture a sense of excitement, games of 'dare' could be used to ratchet up the risk of Black Bridge excursions, as Pete and Dennis Murphy explained:

Dennis: We'd be there putting pennies on the line and them getting crushed as it went over. [...] And there used to be, the Ernesettle side of the bridge there was a little like inspection pit wasn't it, and we used to lay in that and the train would go over the top of you. A steam train you know - they got coal and fire and boiling water!  
Pete: 'cause it was I dare you to do it, I double dare you!<sup>110</sup>

Of course, local identity was also forged through less dramatic encounters with the landscape. Ernesettle's tidal creek was a particularly rich site of shared experiences, especially in the summer when 'everyone would spend all summer holidays swimming in the creek' entire families heading there on the weekends.<sup>111</sup>

It was quite a popular area you used to go down there on a Sunday afternoon in the summer it used to be packed! It used to be like a beach you'd go anywhere else, even though it wasn't like a, you wouldn't call it a nice place to go. Terribly muddy, but they used to swim in it.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Alison Train, op cit.

<sup>109</sup> Sterry, op cit.

<sup>110</sup> Murphy and Murphy, op cit.

<sup>111</sup> Browning, Toms (nee Oxland), and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>112</sup> Andy Strike. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky, 2013.

Figure 3.11.



There was a strong environmental component to the Ernesettle identity, forged through both dramatic and everyday events within the local landscape. 'I double-dare ya!' – Black Bridge, site of an Ernesettle rite of passage with steam train passing over in the 1950s (top), and more recently in 2013 (below). Photographs courtesy of Ian Sells/B. Mills, and Patrick Pierce.

Although the muddy creek was not 'what you'd call a nice place', Ernesettler's made the most of what they'd got. The communal use of space underscored a shared sense of ownership, fostering a collective identity that was closely allied to the landscape. Shared experiences have entered collective memory, sometimes as a result of dramatic events. Andy Strike once found 'a little baby had fallen into the river [and] somebody had dived in just by chance and got it'.<sup>113</sup> This was not the only near-death experience associated with the creek, and several drownings over the years are still commemorated by graffiti and flowers at Black Bridge, the names of their tragic victims known throughout the community. Whether at the level of the community or family, significant events of life and death in relation to the locality formed cornerstones of personal and ancestral autobiographies. For Charlie Sells, the creek was the site of courtship with his wife, and place in which to secure social ties with neighbours.

I spent a lot of time in the creek with my boat, my model boats. Before I got married I used to paddle up to Calstock or up the Tavy to Lopwell dam. [Later] going around with my wife up and down the river. [Our daughter] Katherine went with us down to Cawsand when she was a baby. Quite a trip that was. Then we went to Bovisand from here. Took us about hour and half to get there, going down with the tide and coming back with the tide later on. So we'd leave here in the morning and come back in the evening... We used to moor a boat up alongside the creek and go along and pick wild strawberries, only little tiny ones but beautiful, really mouth-watering... One year I took my family down to Wilcove on the River Lhyner. At the entrance to the River Lhyner there's an island, Beggars Island. I took my family down to the beach that's there, and then I come back and picked my neighbours up and their daughter and took them down. I must've had a fair sized motor then... We [also] used to go around the corner here, [to the] Warleigh estate. There's a little beach there and a little pool just up from the beach. We used to catch frogs and newts and that up there. I used to take the boat around there and my wife and I used to go swimming. I've never been a very good swimmer, but she was. It's a muddy bottom, you could feel the crabs tripping over your feet!<sup>114</sup>

Charlie's boat, made by his own labour in a downstairs room of the Ernesettle youth club (see also chapter 5), provides another example of the inventive nature of economic necessity. A model citizen in many respects, Charlie Sells was an exemplar of the working class cultural incorporation affected by the post-war settlement. Raised by a widowed mother in a cramped Devonport tenement, Charlie took full advantage of the life offered by Ernesettle to

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Sells, op cit.

become the dedicated family man, craftsman, and worker of the planners' imaginary, embracing the new opportunities for personal fulfilment that his environment and home life afforded.

Others adopted a more opportunistic and less institutionally aligned relationship with nature. For Andy Strike, for example, Ernesettle creek's lightly policed waters offered valuable contraband. A fishing trip could yield 'sackfuls of flat fish' as well as a few illegally caught salmon that had to be hidden under the floorboards of the boat until they could be 'sold round the houses' of the estate.<sup>115</sup> When fortune presented an opportunity, Ernesettle's economic marginality gave rise to practices on the edge of what was legally authorised, but which were socially acceptable within the trusted confines of the neighbourhood. Sheila Browning, for example, was conscious of the moral ambiguity of gathering the farmer's windfalls for toffee apples, but such acts were justified in the context of relative scarcity and neighbourly sharing.

D'you remember Glor when my dad used to make toffee apples in the summer? He used to go over the creek, you know, mud up to here, and pick up the windfalls from the orchard. I suppose really in a way it were stealing? I suppose, is that the right word to use? And he'd come back with a sack over his back, shimmy sticks, and do all the toffee apples in the summer at the back, I remember that. All the kids used to have them you know. They thought that was lovely, you never had toffee apples did you? You only had fruit at Christmas really.<sup>116</sup>

The resources of the local area fed into a consciousness of difference, especially in respect of other post-war estates which formed the extent of many Ernesettle youths experiential knowledge of the outside world. Mr and Mrs Ashton, the first family in their street to own a car, recalled that:

a lot of kids in Ernesettle never even went outside of Plymouth, [...] we even took kids on the moors<sup>117</sup> and they've said "where's this?". "We've never seen anywhere like this before!"<sup>118</sup>

As ethnographer Anton Cohen has observed, '[t]he ethnography of locality is an account of how people experience their difference from others' the drawing of lines of distinction between *us* and *them*.<sup>119</sup> For Jean Darlby this distinction

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<sup>115</sup> Strike, 2013, op cit.

<sup>116</sup> Browning, Toms (nee Oxland), and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>117</sup> Dartmoor is six miles away from Ernesettle at its closest point.

<sup>118</sup> Ashton and Ashton, op cit.

<sup>119</sup> Anthon P. Cohen. (ed.). *Belonging, Identity and social organisation in British rural cultures*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982. p.2

was based on geography, Ernesettle being 'a very special estate, compared to like Whitleigh and some of the estates, Ham and all that, they didn't have all that water and that around you know'.<sup>120</sup> Whereas for Graham Nicholas, antipathy for Whitleigh was a result of 'snobs there; the people were distant with each other'.<sup>121</sup> The limited experience of the wider geographies of the city or region meant that consciousness of *others* was more readily articulated vis-a-vis the immediate neighbours in Whitleigh and Honicknowle than in relation to other markers of distinction. But this sense of difference was also a sense of parity: Ernesettlers could claim superiority to Whitleigh because, as a sister post-war neighbourhood, Whitleigh shared Ernesettle's architectural qualities, throwing differences in topography and sociability into sharp relief. As chapter 5 explores in more detail, by the 1960s a territoriality forged in childhood rambles had evolved into a fierce loyalty to the neighbourhood, and to its' *kind of people*. When the first generation of Ernesettle children grew to adulthood, this powerful sense of local identity was rehearsed through benign gang rivalry with neighbouring teens, and later, in reciprocal networks between similar estates.

### **'You and your home deserve a treat' – from self-sufficiency to self-gratification**

Whilst place-based identities were being forged out-of-doors in the wider landscape of Ernesettle and surrounds, its domestic culture was also on the move. If the experience of home-making in Ernesettle's early years was shaped by the core values of self-sufficiency, work ethic, and mutual aid, then as the era of austerity receded in the 1960s, new ethics and techniques of living became more visible via the television screens, advertisements, and shop windows of a burgeoning consumer culture. The productive economy (to which Ernesettle with its Bush Radio and Slumberland factories contributed) relied upon domestic consumer demand to sustain the economic growth of the nation, and as such the *making up* of consumers became a project of national importance. Self-gratification and civility were less frequently constructed in opposition (as evidenced in chapter 2, for example, in the critical annihilation of the suburban lifestyle), but rather came to be

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<sup>120</sup> Darlby, op cit.

<sup>121</sup> Nicholas, op cit.



affiliated 'in an apparently virtuous liaison of happiness and profit'.<sup>122</sup> It took some time, however, for a new *consumer lifestyle* to eclipse existing patterns of collectivity and community. Rather than being overturned, collective values that had been enthusiastically expressed in home-care and gardening began to be mediated by consumer goods. Televisions, hair dryers, cars, and rugs were amongst the many private possessions that were adopted into a local culture of neighbourly reciprocity during a period of transition in which sharing offered a temporary fix to the satiation of consumer desire.

In Ernesettle the end of austerity was made visible by the arrival of domestic appliances that marked the increasing affluence of individual families: the first fridge, or first television in each street a source of family pride and neighbourly envy. The TV set was not just a signifier of consumer achievement, it also delivered and repeatedly reinforced the creed of self-gratification through goods, providing 'a compelling wide-band information channel for consumption advocacy'.<sup>123</sup> New narrative forms, such as soap opera and advertising commercials, established a new 'public habitat of images for identification, and a plurality of pedagogies for everyday life [...] that set out in often meticulous, if banal detail, the habits of conduct which might enable one to live a life that is personally pleasurable and socially acceptable'.<sup>124</sup> These messages were reinforced in more traditional print media. An increase in the quantity and content of advertising in the two editions of the Plymouth Corporation's tenant's handbook (c. 1950 and 1960), marks the evolving meanings and significance of participation in the consumer marketplace. In the first edition of 1950, only 25% of the handbook is advertising, of which one quarter makes no attempt to sell to the readership, being straightforward sponsorship by the building contractors involved in the estates' construction. The remainder includes basics such as milk or coal; alongside domestic appliances, ironmongery, seeds, and furniture.<sup>125</sup> The later edition, believed to be circa 1960, has a 100% increase in advertising, with half of the booklet dedicated to the promotion of products and services. These included illustrated adverts for cars, carpets, furniture, and non-essentials such as 'Bonny Junior Fashions', and 'Capps Jewellery and Silverware'. Many

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<sup>122</sup> Miller and Rose, op cit., p.141.

<sup>123</sup> Offer, op cit., p.8.

<sup>124</sup> Miller and Rose, op cit., p.141.

<sup>125</sup> Plymouth Corporation. *Your House Your Home*.

retailers offered hire-purchase terms, bringing ownership of even the more luxurious goods within the reach of the council house tenant.<sup>126</sup>

Advertisers sought to stimulate consumer confidence, not only in the products on display, but in the act of consumption itself. Tenants were exhorted to 'furnish with confidence', and to experience the sensuous pleasures of shopping.<sup>127</sup> Local traders emphasised modernity and choice to draw in custom from the estates. Widders, for example, offered an 'extensive ultra modern showroom' to attract shoppers; Cyril Lord Carpets promised 'an unrivalled ranged of glorious colours, 100% mothproof'; whilst A.& R. Hardware proclaimed the 'finest display of traditional and contemporary wallpapers in the South-West'. Where the adverts of the 1950s handbook professed to service modest, everyday needs, those of 1960s handbook promised pleasure and personal gratification: 'You and your home deserve a treat' declared the Caldwell and Almond advertisement, 'Berite plastic-faced board and laminate will supply it at surprisingly small cost!'<sup>128</sup>

Local furniture supplier, Bartletts, even acknowledged the post-war estates as a significant source of custom in recent years, declaring: 'it has been a pleasure to furnish many of the magnificent houses built in Plymouth since the war'.<sup>129</sup> This demand for furnishings took on a slightly different character with the end of furniture rationing in 1952, and the progressive arrival of consumer affluence and the wider availability of hire purchase finance in subsequent years. As post-war austerity gave way to an era of increasing financial solvency, fashion began to shape the selection and timing of purchases once largely dependent on circumstance; and the idea that products might work together as part of a *scheme* began to complement their functional and emotional qualities. As Mike Featherstone argues, in an era of abundance, 'the management of choice itself became an art form', with 'a stylistic self-consciousness' emerging in consumer practice through 'the assemblage of

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<sup>126</sup> Plymouth Corporation. *Plymouth Corporation Tenant's Handbook*. Plymouth: Underhill Ltd.c.1960.

<sup>127</sup> Bartletts, cited in *ibid*.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*.

Figure 3.12.



WE AIM to offer what you need for fuller enjoyment of your leisure time.

**INDOORS**

- Toys
- Games
- Models
- Kits
- Hobbies
- Art Materials
- Adhesives
- Philately
- Stationery
- Geometry Sets
- Gifts
- Kitchenware
- Labour-Savers

**OUTDOORS**

- Sports
- Fishing
- Boating
- Swimming
- Camping
- Picnicking
- Li-Los
- Games
- Toys

**LOWEST PRICES**

**MAKE the MOST of YOUR Leisure Time**

FOR DARK EVENINGS — try Leisure Time for a change. Kits, carpentry, painting with oils, darts, table-tennis and indoor games.

FOR BRIGHTER DAYS - camping equipment, picnic sets, stoves and chairs, Li-Los, canoes and everything for the beach; tennis, cricket football and sports equipment.

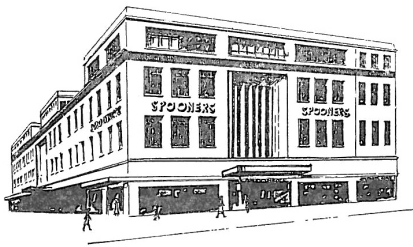
**MAKE the MOST of YOUR CHILDREN'S Leisure Time**

TOYS, TOYS, TOYS for every age — our customers tell us we've the BEST SELECTION in Town. YOU CAN SAVE through the Leisure Time Club for Camping Holidays, Canoes, etc. Xmas and Birthday Presents for all.

The LEISURE TIME Shop — 116 Cornwall St.  
PHONE 66421 (Nearly opposite Woolworths and the Market)

\* WATCH LEISURE TIME WINDOWS FOR OFF-SEASON BARGAINS \*

## FURNISH YOUR HOME at . . . .



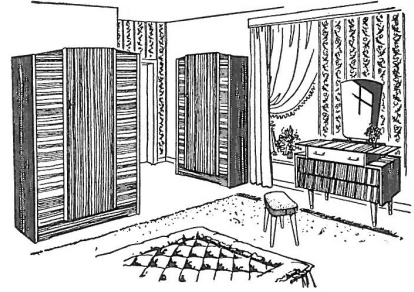
**THE DEPARTMENT STORE OF THE WEST**

Where you can obtain the finest and most competitive HIRE PURCHASE TERMS in the district . . .

# SPOONERS

**ROYAL PARADE, PLYMOUTH • Tel. 66666**

*Furnish with Confidence . . .*



Bartletts is a private Firm—owned and staffed by Plymouth people.

For nearly a quarter of a century we have offered the finest Furnishing Values in the South West and it has been our privilege to furnish many of the magnificent houses that have been built in Plymouth since the war.

You will find in our Showrooms at 4 Royal Parade, as well as at Chippendale House, North Hill, the most varied selection of the finest quality Furniture that you could possibly desire.

And you will have the satisfaction of knowing that whether you pay cash, or out of income (and it's all the same to us), you are obtaining real value for money. But don't just take our word for it—make a few comparisons.

## BARTLETTS

WILLIAM BARTLETT (PLYMOUTH) LTD.  
4 ROYAL PARADE & CHIPPENDALE HOUSE, NORTH HILL  
PLYMOUTH. Telephone 68901

YOU AND YOUR HOME  
DESERVE A TREAT

## BERITE

Plastic Faced Board and Laminate  
will supply it at surprisingly small cost  
See your D.I.Y. Shop or contact the  
Distributors

**CALDWELL & ALMOND LTD.**  
BUILDING MATERIAL MERCHANTS  
COXSIDE  
PLYMOUTH 64329

Advertising activated new relations to consumerism, encouraging tenants to consider domestic consumption as a *treat*, and to develop confidence in the novel arts of shopping and decoration. *Leisure*, the temporal obverse of, and reward for, the 40-hour working week, was a particular buzz word — Plymouth even had a shop named in its honour. Advertisements from Plymouth Corporation *Tenants' Handbook*, c. 1960.

goods, clothes, practices, experiences, appearance, and bodily dispositions' that displayed individuality through a lifestyle.<sup>130</sup>

This was an evolution away from the home-making of the immediate post-war years that had served to connect men, women, and children to their homes through the labour of their own hands. Over time a new consciousness developed of *the in thing* that was absent from the descriptions of earlier decoration schemes with their ad hoc combinations of gifts and incidental acquisition. For Gloria Oxland and Sheila Browning, for example, 'furniture on legs' upholstered in plastic or faced in Formica, offered low-maintenance properties but also had a modern appeal, distinct from the *old-fashionedness* of the previous generation.<sup>131</sup> The quality of *newness* was starting to compete with the emotional resonance of the gifted or handmade knick-knack. Those who were able to, like Jean Dalby's (nee Harrison) family, set out to renew and replace much of the original domestic fittings.

Oh, we were fully papered. 'Cause Dad was a builder and he did all our inside. We had a marble fire fitted in the wall which was quite a thing in them days. We had a fridge. No-one else had a fridge. A half fridge. 'Cause he put a half cupboard, he took the larder cupboard out and put one up. Lots of things he did, you know, it was nice. I think just being a builder I suppose, he did that extra little things like you know... Well they were going to buy it. Dad left and went to work in Bahrain for a seven year contract, and he did six years, he came home every year. And he went back [for the final year], and he died, [aged] 49. So, it never did get bought.<sup>132</sup>

Consumer interior decoration projects offered a different kind of autonomy and creativity to the self-sufficiency of the early 1950s, an autonomy based on the management of choice – of applying discrimination and taste in the face of abundance. Consumerism also served as a marker of status and distinction from others, especially in the crucial post-war decades when, after all, 'no-one else had a fridge'. The ability to participate in consumer markets progressed at different rates for different families, and was linked to family size and income. It took some time, therefore, for a *lifestyle consumerism* based on the projection of taste to eclipse existing patterns of collectivity and community. In the meantime, the very scarcity of some goods combined with

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<sup>130</sup> Mike Featherstone. *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. London: Sage, 1991, pp.83 and 86.

<sup>131</sup> Browning, Toms (nee Oxland), and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>132</sup> Dalby, op cit.

a pre-existing culture of neighbouring and mutual support to produce new forms of sociability that traversed the traditional threshold of the front doorstep. Rather than acting as a catalyst for the privatisation of social activity, television in the early days was a particular focus for the reinforcement of neighbourliness and shared interest. The Harrison family, having 'the only telly in the road' regularly played host to 'quite a few' of their neighbours on a Saturday night, the adults taking privileged places on chairs and sofas, and children gathered round on the floor.<sup>133</sup> Roger Beck and his father had 'an elaborate arrangement [...] a whole system [...] of watching other people's televisions', visiting fellow church goers for Sunday evening telly, 'a lady at the bottom of the road [...] for children's television', and the neighbouring Littles for the Cup Final.<sup>134</sup>

The absorption of consumer goods into patterns of neighbouring, built on existing conventions of sharing and borrowing common amongst people with low incomes for whom scarcity of material resources could range from an occasional occurrence to a weekly necessity. As Joanna Bourke has argued, 'reciprocity was crucial', in a culture conditioned by low and unpredictable incomes.<sup>135</sup> Families continued to live by the codes of neighbourly behaviour forged in the pre-war years when 'mutual aid was not so much chosen as imperative for survival' in working-class districts.<sup>136</sup> Ernesettle, despite its burgeoning consumer-power, was nonetheless a community habituated to the experience of poverty. As my co-interviewer Rob Fraser recalled, an awful lot of 'borrowing' went on, and 'you knew that borrow meant, "can we have cause we haven't got"'. In the Fraser household, 'people were always knocking on the door', and 'if we were short of something we were always dispatched to someone to knock on [their] door'.<sup>137</sup> Borrowing commonly involved food ingredients – a cup of sugar, or some flour for instance – but domestic electricals and even carpets might be temporarily loaned to the neighbours. On Lakeside Drive, Rob recalled, 'the two girls living next door [...] were forever knocking on the door saying "can we borrow the hairdryer?"', and at Lypne Avenue, Sheila Browning remembered 'Mrs Street must've been

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Beck and Fraser, *op cit.*

<sup>135</sup> Bourke, *op cit.*, p.149.

<sup>136</sup> Ravetz, *op cit.*, p.164.

<sup>137</sup> Browning, Toms (nee Oxland), and Fraser, *op cit.*

having visitors [because] she borrowed my mum's rugs! And brought them back after!'<sup>138</sup>

Consumer goods, therefore, whilst becoming increasingly accessible, visible, and culturally important, were, for the period of this study at least, adopted into patterns of communal behaviour that characterised the working class neighbourhood. However, it would appear that the most affluent consumers were quick to realise that there was one significant step required to participate in consumer lifestyle to the full – they would have to become home owners. The owned home would provide the ultimate canvas on which consumer discernment and taste could be writ large. Gloria Oxland's parents, enthusiastic consumers on behalf of their daughter 'who never went without', were 'determined that [Gloria] was going to have a house of [her] own'.<sup>139</sup> Whilst Jean Harrison's family invested in the house and garden in the expectation that 'they were going to buy it'.<sup>140</sup> Facilitated by Mr Harrison's high earnings abroad, this was a rare ambition amongst Ernesettlers in the mid-1960s, but one which anticipated a much more widespread aspiration in years to come – a theme that will be picked up in chapter 6.

## Conclusion

The sense of identity that emerged in Ernesettle was not equivalent to that of the imagined village, but it was in many ways aligned with it. A discursive Britishness allied to the countryside and wartime patriotism, unified residents despite their diverse regional origins, but it also served to exclude or marginalise non-British residents creating a white ethnic monopoly. A sense of all-in-it-togetherness contributed towards a pioneer effect that was underscored by the shared experience of wartime and hardship in early life. As a result of geographic isolation, women became the anchors of a place-based identity shaped by a combination of circumstances including personal history, relative economic parity, peripherality, and the local environment (built and natural). Relatively modest incomes conspired to curtail female mobility, fostering inventive means of making extra money and being sociable within the neighbourhood.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Darlby (nee Harrison), op cit.

The home-centric life that Ernesettle fostered was not for everyone, and in a sense the early years of the estate witnessed a process of self-selection in which new arrivals tested their ability to adapt. For those who preferred a 'different sort of life' there was always the option of a transfer back into town, or a house swap to another estate. Thus, the community that emerged from the first generation of settlers was comprised of families who were more readily co-opted into the norms of domestic citizenship. Conditioned by a pre-existing culture of working-class respectability, their home-making asserted pride, self-respect, and gratitude for the certainties of a rooted domestic life. New arrivals to the estate measured their homes against the over-crowded tenements and exploitative landlords they had left behind, experiencing the transition as an emancipation and a social elevation. Their new landlord, embodied in the person of the *rent man*, was also a neighbour, and their rent was paid in the expectation of receipt of benefit in kind through the maintenance of the physical and social infrastructure of the neighbourhood. As a result of this self-selecting process, in the main, Ernesettle houses were well-cared-for, gardens were cultivated, and neighbours offered each other friendly support.

There were, however, inherent tensions within the domestic dream. Based on a family structure and ethnic composition intended to deliver the conservative ideal of 'future Britons', housing design and allocation policy pre-supposed and reproduced nuclear families that were white, heterosexual, and patriarchal. The gendering of domestic responsibility could be oppressive for both women and men who failed to fit the mould. In larger families senior girls often shouldered an unequal burden of housework, and cultural pressure to inculcate children into their domestic obligations was reflected in attitudes to 'spoil' only children whose socialization was compromised by the lesser demands of a smaller household. Families who could not maintain high domestic standards found it difficult to assimilate and moved on. For those who stayed, the life of the neighbourhood took on a feminine character, with women and children at the heart of local everyday life.

A cast of characters servicing the local domestic economy, such as Tom the milkman, Mr Dawson the Butcher, and Clair Train on her wool round, served as points of collective memory, interwoven into the fabric of place. Their

presence in the streets supported a climate of shared supervision which enabled wide-ranging freedoms for children. Collective memory, especially for children, also attached to centres of social congregation in the local environment such as the creek, Black Bridge and the apple orchards at Warleigh Point. Children developed a territorial attachment to the locality, whilst adults demonstrated their obligations to the community by disciplining offspring whose behaviour offended the neighbours. This behavioural discipline was shared and sometimes over-zealous: supervised and policed by every member of the community, punishment was enforced behind the closed doors of the private home.

Increasing economic prosperity brought an abundance of consumer choice into the home in the form of mass-produced electrical goods, furnishings, clothing, and accessories. Advertising and televisual entertainment encouraged people to view self-gratification as their personal right, and promised to deliver it through the acquisition of goods. Lifestyle consumerism, in a nascent form, was emerging. The management of consumer choice was becoming a skill in itself – the projection of discernment and taste through an assemblage of goods, an increasingly valued aptitude. In Ernesettle, however, consumerism co-existed alongside collectivity. Scarce goods were *shared* with neighbours and local loyalties reaffirmed through the communal entertainment of the televised cup final, or through reciprocal borrowing.

Together these factors gradually coalesced into a powerful sense of place and of local loyalty. This place-based identity found expression in practice in Ernesettler's working and leisure lives, as the next chapters will show.



## Chapter 4 – Workers

I was on a very large line there was about 18 of us. So the television would start off as a bare frame, and by time you did each job, each girl did a certain amount, and it got to the end and it was finished. So it would go then to the tester and that sort of thing. I think because I was, I was only like 16 and a half I suppose, and I was quick, and I learnt to do every job, so in the end I could do every job on that line. [...] So I think she [the line supervisor] saw potential, and said, 'right, you can be my key girl'. So you got a bit more money. And I used to sit at the end with my supervisor and then if anybody put their hand up to go toilet, or if somebody was sick or whatever, I could jump in and do that job. [Otherwise] I would be at the other end, checking their work. You would get sets come down to us and we'd check that everything was good before it went to the inspectors. [...] It was mainly girls on the lines working, and obviously the top supervisors were mainly men. The guys in the offices. And then you had, on the end of our lines was like [male] inspectors.

Kathy Docwra, describing the routine of the Bush production line in Ernesettle in the 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

The everyday life of the production line at Bush Radio's factory was typical of the experience of many workers in Ernesettle in the post-war period. Located in a modern airy factory that had relocated to the regions from a London base, Bush was part of a wider political project to generate an even distribution of full employment across the British nation. Moreover, the daily life of 'the line' epitomized a conception of the nature of work that informed and shaped post-war society itself. Organised on Taylorist principles of efficiency that maximised production through the specialization of discrete tasks, the Bush operation exemplified the perceived alienation associated with modern labour, but it was also implicated in mechanisms for its amelioration. Under the post-war system of full employment and welfare (in the form of housing and social security), workers were to be compensated for the repetitive nature of their working lives through the rewards of leisure and home life. The Ernesettle workplace, like the neighbourhood it sat within, was part of an assemblage of techniques directed towards the goal of social harmony and consensual citizenship that together, actually generated social cohesion. Work, home, and neighbourhood were intertwined, their complex amalgamation fostering social outcomes in the form of community loyalty that was experienced at an

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<sup>1</sup> Docwra, op cit.

everyday level in neighbourly support and worker solidarity 'on the lines'. Neighbours helped each other to get and keep jobs, whilst line-hands cooperated to set their own pace of work.

In turn, the character of domestic and community life in Ernesettle was inflected by the workplace experience and the image after which it was shaped. At work, as elsewhere, assumptions of masculine and feminine competencies reproduced dominant constructions of gender and family life. Yet the potency of these gender constructions was itself being undermined by the evolution in post-war work. Employment decentralization brought modern factories to Ernesettle, their output of domestic consumer goods requiring dextrous manual skills and cheap labour. Working-class women were increasingly sought by and attracted to factory employment, their contributions to the household economy modifying marital power relations and enabling a boom in domestic consumption. In multiple households private negotiations between husbands and wives were taking place as families sought to accommodate the opportunities and rewards of booming production in their everyday lives.

For Ernesettle men, too, post-war employment opportunities wrought changes in the *traditional* working-class alignment of occupation and identity. Work formed part of the virtuous circle of the Fordist economy: providing wages and welfare to fuel consumption, and profits to feed tax revenues for welfare. Yet at the same time as full employment ostensibly delivered on its political promise, bringing 'the parallel enhancement of profits and wages' that enabled working-class families to participate in a society of mass-consumerism, it also prompted new personal relations to work that destabilized the image and the lived experience of the post-war worker.<sup>2</sup> Full employment gave men a much wider choice of work, de-coupling the link between occupational identity and class, and reducing the significance of *job for life* security. At the same time, an abundance of employment and the parallel lure of consumerism created the conditions in which women could be more readily assimilated into the world of waged work, undermining the primacy of the male breadwinner – an ideal which itself underpinned the division of labour at work and at home. For

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<sup>2</sup> Max Koch. *Roads to Post-Fordism. Labour markets and social structures in Europe*. Aldershot, Hants.: Ashgate, 2006, p.35.

Ernesettle men, this manifested as a fault line between pre and post-war generations: young men of the baby boom rejecting the outdated attitudes of their fathers – viewing job security as a potential life-sentence rather than a way of life, and welcoming, or at least becoming reconciled to, consequent changes at home.

This chapter looks at the place of Ernesettle in the development of these transitions, examining the extent to which local conditions shaped and enabled changes to worker identities. Starting with the pre-war circumstances that contributed towards the ‘making up’ of the ideal post-war worker, I consider how inter-war unemployment had psychic, social, and geographic consequences. The ‘psychic crisis of masculinity’<sup>3</sup> caused by the 1930s economic depression worked to reconfirm the importance of the male breadwinner, forcing him to the forefront of post-war policies that actively supported a ‘stratified labour market in which men were dominant’.<sup>4</sup> Ernesettle benefitted from the spatial consequences of this crisis. A post-war policy of decentralization designed to address the geographic unevenness of unemployment saw manufacturing businesses relocated to the regions, with many new factories opening in Plymouth. These included Bush Radio in 1949, Clatworthy upholsterers in 1951 (later Slumberland, then Vi-springs beds), Brown and Sharpe machine parts in 1957 (later Kawasaki Precision Machinery), and Smith’s Crisps in 1959, all located on Ernesettle’s industrial area between the housing estate and the River Tamar.

The first residents to move to Ernesettle in the late 1940s and early 1950s arrived before the estate’s industrial area was fully established, and, unsurprisingly, many brought with them attitudes and occupations that predated the new employment opportunities. In these early years, men and women faced competing (occasionally complementary) social pressures to provide security for their families both financially and within the home. For men, the ability to support a dependent wife and children was a demonstration of masculine responsibility; whilst for women, working for a wage was ‘not

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<sup>3</sup> Sally Alexander. ‘Men’s Fears and Women’s Work: Responses to Unemployment in London Between the Wars.’ *Gender and History*. 12, no. 2 (July 2000): 401-425.

<sup>4</sup> Roberts, op cit., p.73.

quite respectable'.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the post-war home itself, and the opportunities it afforded for consumption and domestic leisure, fuelled an equally powerful desire for earning in excess of subsistence. Families developed their own strategies of household economy in which the financial contributions of women and teenagers formed a vital proportion. Increasingly, waged work for women formed a part of this equation. Through mutual contributions towards the household economy, all adult household members demonstrated their commitment to family, a sentiment which was mediated through the consumption of goods and leisure. Families invested their combined wages in *making homes* through consumer purchases and DIY, and in *making communities* by sharing their leisure time with others (see chapter 5). Thus, work and home were intricately interrelated: opportunities in Ernesettle's local factories provided the wherewithal for domestic consumption, the fruits of which served to reinforce ties to family and home. In the process, assumptions about the 'natural' sexual division of labour that had underpinned the design of homes and neighbourhoods were beginning to be dismantled.

As the economy and employment opportunities continued to grow through the 1960s, men's working identities also began to evolve. *Traditional* working men's occupational identities exemplified in the person of the 'yardie' (dockyard labourer) and his associated allegiances to the trade unions, began to wane as young men found their working lives increasingly characterized by mobility and change. Consumption filled the vacuum left by a declining *worker subjectivity*, but often new consumer resources were adopted into the life of the family and neighbourhood, reinforcing ties with kin, friends, and neighbours – many of whom were part of a social circle forged at work. Collectivity remained a vital component of workers' relations to each other, a feature that manifested in informal practices of worker autonomy on the shop-floor, as well as in neighbourly support for childcare to facilitate dual incomes, and acts of charity following workplace accidents. This collective culture helped to secure employment, sustain household incomes, mitigate the physical and psychic toll of repetitive factory work, and reinforce a sense of local community and neighbourhood values. The link between work and the rewards of work is consistent in oral memory, and is crosscut with themes of

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<sup>5</sup> Bourke, op cit.; and Field, op cit.

family and neighbourhood as both facilitating and motivating factors in the process of getting a job, working, and spending wages.

### **A psychic crisis of masculinity – ‘making up’ the post-war worker**

The very existence of workplaces on Plymouth’s post-war estates was tied into the psychic and social consequences of inter-war unemployment. Post-war policy in this respect was haunted by the experience of the Depression, and the arrival in Ernesettle of national and international manufacturing concerns was the result of a political project to even out the geographic distribution of employment across the nation. Inter-war unemployment had, as Sally Alexander has observed, raised the ‘spectre of entire regions of Britain in chronic decline’ resulting in ‘public anxiety that Greater London’s expansion threatened Britain’s health and wellbeing – was sucking the economic and human lifeblood out of the nation’.<sup>6</sup> Economic productivity was a concern of national importance, and the inter-war experience of unemployment was compounded in wartime by the vulnerability to bombing of industrial concentrations in the capital and elsewhere. Such concerns were addressed by the 1940 Barlow Report, which proposed to decentralize industry away from London, the south-east and the Midlands, to areas with a less-than-diverse employment base.

This spatial redistribution of industry was, in addition, part of the delivery of full (male) employment, designed to address ‘Idleness’ – one of the ‘five giant evils’ identified by Beveridge’s *Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services*. Again, the shadow of inter-war experience coloured the vision of work after the war, which sought to heal the economic and psychic scars of mass male unemployment. In working-class cultures of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century ‘manhood was identified with being the provider’ by both genders.<sup>7</sup> For men, wage-earning was a key component of masculinity learned from childhood and reinforced by female family members: the rite of passage of entering the workplace as teenage boys denoting an enhanced status amongst peers and within the home, resulting in the increased deference of siblings and female

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<sup>6</sup> Sally Alexander. ‘A New Civilization? London Surveyed 1928–1940s’. *History Workshop Journal* (Oxford University Press), no. 64 (2007): 296-320, p.298.

<sup>7</sup> Cross, 1993, op cit., p.148.

family members.<sup>8</sup> In this context, the experience of inter-war unemployment was devastating to the male psyche. Working-class men experienced loss of work as deeply emasculating, prompting what Sally Alexander has labelled a psychic crisis of masculinity: 'men's fears of not being wanted, of being displaced, of women taking men's jobs, run through the memories of the twenties and thirties, and were confirmed by official statistics'.<sup>9</sup>

Alongside the ideal of the male provider, there existed widespread public concerns about the respectability of work for women. The wartime experience of women entering male workplaces had been accompanied by a suspicion of moral disintegration in the workplace and the potential for promiscuity.<sup>10</sup> And on a practical level too, female employment could be unattractive, effectively doubling a woman's workload as there would be no consequent reduction in domestic responsibilities. Elizabeth Roberts, in her oral history of working-class women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, found that '[w]omen whose husbands earned sufficient money to clothe, feed, and house the family preferred to have a reduced workload rather than extra income'.<sup>11</sup>

These social and psychic factors shaped post-war political policies, consolidating the sexual division of labour in an attempt to protect and reinforce male domination of the labour market. Politicians and trade unions advocated policies which resisted feminist demands for equal pay and preserved male roles as providers, whilst welfare policies presupposed a domestic role for women (see chapter 2).<sup>12</sup> Decentralization itself, it has been argued, supported a 'stratified labour market in which men were dominant' by circumscribing women's employment to only those low-paid opportunities that existed within their limited geographic reach in the new towns and estates of the post-war settlement.<sup>13</sup> Yet at the same time, these opportunities (however lowly) provided an alternative to the dominant model of feminine domesticity, enticing women away from the home and into the workplace.

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<sup>8</sup> Bourke, *op cit.*, p.131.

<sup>9</sup> S. Alexander, 2000, *op cit.*, p.403.

<sup>10</sup> Bourke, *op cit.*, p.126.

<sup>11</sup> Roberts, cited in Bourke, *op cit.*, p.127.

<sup>12</sup> S. Alexander, 2000, *op cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Roberts, *op cit.*, p.73.

The gendering of work and home was connected to a new level of political interest in, and protection of, domestic leisure.<sup>14</sup> Reformist ideas circulating in wider culture and politics had embedded the idea that the worker was alienated from his labour by a combination of repetitive, unskilled manual tasks that offered little in the way of job satisfaction, and also by a relation of exploitation to capitalist owners of the means of production (e.g. Karl Marx's *Capital*, vol. 1, 1867). In the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this picture of *the worker* operated alongside newly popularised interest in psychology to 'reconstruct the productive subject' with the result that '[i]n Britain in the inter-war years, a new vocabulary and technology for programming the employment relationship was born'.<sup>15</sup> This new vocabulary included 'a new attentiveness to the personal dimension of productivity': the worker was to be understood, not just as part of the productive machinery, but as an individual with a mind, fears and anxieties.<sup>16</sup> As Miller and Rose observe, 'this language established interdependence between the worker viewed as a productive machine and the worker viewed as a person with a family and home life'.<sup>17</sup> In discursive terms at least, roles at work and at home were mutually constitutive: as woman's domestic role was to include the facilitation of male leisure, and a man's productive role was to provide the resources to *keep* a wife. As chapter 2 explored, the homes constructed in Ernesettle and across Britain as part of the post-war settlement, were shaped by these views: built to provide for leisure as well as labour with gardens and shed for hobbies and relaxation.

The defining features of an imagined worker identity both shaped, and were in turn reproduced by, the system of social government. In the resulting political and economic structures of post-war work and welfare, workers were to be compensated for the alienation of the workplace through the rewards of leisure and home life. More than just a capitalist imperative to increase productivity, novel vocabularies and technologies of work and welfare 'would ensure simultaneously the contentment and health of the worker and the

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<sup>14</sup> Cross, 1993, op cit.

<sup>15</sup> Miller and Rose, op cit., p.44.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.44.

profitability and efficiency of enterprise'.<sup>18</sup> In work (as evidenced within the neighbourhood in chapter 2), the historic compromise of the post-war settlement sought the reconciliation of interests, in this case between workers and employers. Most significantly, labour representation was incorporated into the policy-making process. Gordon Hughes and Gail Lewis observe that the entry of Ernest Bevin, 'the most influential trade union leader of all time', into Churchill's Coalition government initiated a 30 year period of 'consultation about policy between the government and bodies like the trade union movement leadership, employers' organizations and business federations, aimed at consensus across potentially conflicting sides'.<sup>19</sup> Whilst at home welfare provision and protections were enacted to facilitate the contentment of the worker in his time off through domestic leisure and consumption. The resulting image of *the worker* took on the shape of a man employed in unskilled or semi-skilled labour within a large organisation. His unrewarding work day was to be relieved by the compensations of home life, which were imagined as a wife and children, and a house and garden, to be enjoyed at weekends and holidays. This imagined ideal was defined by a conflation of work and the conditions of mass production environment, and consequently shaped welfare, leisure, and home life in its own image, with lived consequences for post-war society. Early arrivals in Ernesettle were forced to negotiate between competing pressures: exposed on the one hand to powerful political and cultural discourses regarding the primacy of the male breadwinner; and on the other, to a local demand for female labour, itself an unintended consequence of employment decentralization originally designed to resolve unevenness in *male* labour markets.

### **'We're married, you've no need to work now' – money and the male provider**

Having survived pre-war crises and been reinvigorated by post-war policy, the ideal of the male provider exerted a powerful influence over the everyday lives of ordinary people. At an individual and family level, the pressures of moral respectability, ideal masculinity, and domestic pragmatism combined to create a social convention that was hard to resist, especially in the immediate post-war years. When they married in 1947, Ernesettle resident Bill Ward told his

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.45.

<sup>19</sup> Huges and Lewis, op cit., p.25.



Figure 4.1.



The pomp and ceremony attendant on the opening of the Bush Radio Factory in 1948 is a measure of the significance of decentralisation of manufacturing operations from London to Plymouth, and of pride in an exemplar modern workplace of its time. Despite the parallel emphasis on feminine domesticity evident in design intention and tenants' handbooks, decentralisation of light industries created opportunities for regular female paid labour on Plymouth's estates from their inception.

Photographs courtesy of PWDRO, Western Morning News Collection refs. 1418/3892, 1418/3893.

wife, then a shop assistant in Marks and Spencers, 'oh we're married, you've no need to work now'.<sup>20</sup> It was an instruction he would later reflect on with regret, explaining:

[it was the] worst thing I ever did I think. Stupid really because I was in the Royal Marines then, and she was home on her own anyway. So she might just as well have been at work really.<sup>21</sup>

Such a decision could, as Bill implied, leave housewives feeling isolated and alone, a lost opportunity in both financial and social terms. It also placed a tremendous burden of responsibility on husbands, not only to provide financially for their families, but also to support them emotionally. With social horizons limited to the immediate domestic or neighbourhood environment some women lost confidence and leant more heavily on their partners – an effect which may have been exacerbated by relocation to a new neighbourhood at a distance from the family and kin of early life. In a separate interview, Bill's daughter-in-law Jackie recalled that Mrs Ward:

was very timid and she had a breakdown in her earlier years, and I think that he [Bill] sort of tried to protect her, but I think that in some ways I think it didn't do her any favours. [...] He over protected her really and then when she had to do anything for herself she found it very difficult.<sup>22</sup>

Similar cases of loneliness and isolation were documented by Young and Wilmot in their work on the post-war relocation of East Enders, a history which helped to mythologise the emotional importance of *mum* in working-class society. Yet, in the Ward's case it was not so much dislocation from family, but rather, dislocation from the sociability and independence of work that was a source of regret.

The primacy of male labour had other consequences too for Ernesettle households. A marriage relationship shaped by economic, and in some cases emotional, dependency could also precipitate power struggles to establish compensatory areas of supremacy. Typical of such strategies was female control of the household budget and the right to determine consumer choices within the home. As historian Joanna Bourke has observed, although the aim was to reduce female powerlessness, the results could be counter-intuitive,

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<sup>20</sup> Bill Ward. interview by Hilary Kolinsky, 02/05/2013.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ward and Ward, op cit.

widening the separation between *his and her* kinds of labour.<sup>23</sup> Such practices helped to naturalise the separation of work and home along gendered lines by establishing a complementary division of production and consumption into male and female domains – whilst men earned money, women spent it. Roger Beck explained how this worked in his household:

With my parents the wages really basically were given over to mother with father keeping whatever he kept to himself, and then mother administered everything, that was the arrangement. I suspect it was not uncommon. [...] In my father's case I never detected any friction at all in that area. It just seemed to be fine really. And I suppose with mother being home and these various people coming for the money during the week, it all kind of, you know, it just worked, it worked well.<sup>24</sup>

As Roger stressed, in his family the unequal distribution of financial resources was not an overt power-play but rather an accepted social convention. A source of compensatory empowerment for the domesticated female, it also delivered pragmatic advantages *working well* for Ernesettlers because (as described in chapter 3) it was via the home that much consumer business was transacted. With money literally changing hands across the doorstep, from housewife to rent man, grocer, insurance rep, milkman, coalman, and so on, feminine control of household income was not only personally empowering, but, moreover, practically necessary. Thus, the local geography of the domestic economy was also implicated in the employment opportunities available to women, staying close to home an unavoidable condition of servicing the *business* of domestic life.

### **'That was what she did' – women and wage earning**

As the remembered animation of street life attests, for many women, being at home did not preclude social contact, nor did it have to preclude earning an income. Indeed, some young wives had, from an early age, found the means of combining their caring duties at home with neighbourly sociability and money-making. Women's work had a specific geography, which centred on the home and networked into a distinctly localized marketplace, it achieved an accommodation between dominant cultural expectations and the desire for autonomy. Roger Beck's mother was typical in this respect, combining her

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<sup>23</sup> Bourke, op cit., p.67-8.

<sup>24</sup> Beck and Fraser, op cit.

caring roles of mother and daughter, with her personal love of music and earning capacity as a teacher.

She would be quite well known [locally], was because for a large part of that time she taught individual children piano and singing. You know, every evening from school and on into the evening and most of Saturday, mother would have pupils. 'Cause that was her, um, that was what she did. I mean when she left school she got some qualifications from one of the schools of music, and because her mother was in poor health it was decided that it was best if she had a job that would allow her to be at home. And so she taught music in her young days before she got married. And then had a break when she got married and the war came and I came, but then she went back to the music teaching.<sup>25</sup>

Many housewives of the 1950s, like Mrs Beck, had an ambiguous relationship to paid work that seemed to defy description. Although relating his mother's earning activities, Roger hesitated to use the words 'career' or 'job' because this vocabulary neither fitted feminine expectations of the era, nor accommodated the combination of teaching, Christian activism, music, and home-making that made up his mother's life. After a pause, he instead settled for 'that was what she did', an ambiguous but apt catch-all for the combined feminine responsibilities of caring, consuming, and supplementary earning that took place within the 1950s home. In fact, despite the popularity of the term 'housewife' in sociological literature, no interviewees used this word to identify themselves/their mothers/wives – it appears to have been an inadequate descriptor for Ernesettle's female residents. As Roger Beck elaborated, even in the culturally conservative 1950s, women's paid work existed in a variety of forms within the home and neighbourhood.

Mother would take me to a lady in Kenley Gardens who made trousers and other things and she was known as a lady who did that to supplement her income. [...] Yes so I think there were people that did other things to supplement [income]. Another way a number of ladies supplemented their income in those days was by running these various clubs you know that you could have, a big catalogue and several ladies ran that.<sup>26</sup>

By doing a variety of creative, commercial, and craft activities for money, Ernesettle women of the 1950s made their own financial contributions towards the household economy. This work increased household income and ameliorated the potentially detrimental psychological effects of estate isolation

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<sup>25</sup> Beck and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

experienced by Malcolm Ward's wife, and subsequently articulated as 'the problem with no name' in Betty Freidan's *Feminine Mystique* of 1965. Yet as the Ward's experience confirms, paid work outside the home was already a feature of working-class women's lives, with marriage sometimes acting as a cut-off point. As Ernesettle's factories grew to become a more established feature of local life, married women and their husbands too, increasingly sought to accommodate women's work outside the home within their everyday lives: a shift that was facilitated by workplace proximity in the neighbourhood.

### **'We were doing very nicely after all' – work and the household economy**

Women's work had always featured in working-class households, a consequence of economic necessity, and it could be argued, a continuation of a pre-industrial household work strategy that had never really disappeared. As R.E. Pahl has argued, the work/home binary emerged with the arrival of industrialization, a system of work discipline that triggered the sexual division of labour. Under conditions of industrial employment, the once loose allocation of earning and household roles and responsibilities became more rigid, gendered, and over time, deeply institutionally embedded, supplanting more egalitarian and flexible household strategies to make 'best use of resources for getting by under given social and economic conditions'.<sup>27</sup> But such strategies persisted in the poorest households of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with 'over a third of all women [...] involved in some form of waged labour in Britain for the hundred years between 1850 and 1950'.<sup>28</sup> In many cases, women's work passed under the radar of official records, which consistently under-represented the part-time work of washerwomen, charwomen, landladies, baby-minders, and midwives,<sup>29</sup> and ignored informal economies of 'neighbourhood exchange, scavenging, theft and barter, [...] in which wives and children were particularly active'.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> R.E Pahl. *On Work. Historical, Comparative and Theoretical Approaches*. R.E. Pahl (ed.). Oxford: Blackwell, 1988, p.10.

<sup>28</sup> Linda McDowell. *Gender, Identity and Place. Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, p.75.

<sup>29</sup> S. Alexander, 1976, op cit.

<sup>30</sup> John Benson. *The Working Class in Britain 1850-1939*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2003, p.46.

Pahl's conception of the family as household unit engaged in a mutual economic endeavour is pertinent to the analysis of working-class experience of the post-war period. As he argues, understanding work as part of a 'household strategy' avoids *a priori* assumptions about internal conflict and the naming of putative household heads, allowing for variance between families as they negotiated economic and social priorities in their own ways. Such strategies, Gary Cross has argued, can be understood as part of a working-class quest for familial autonomy: 'a will to privacy and freedom from humiliating reliance on the state or charity'.<sup>31</sup> Social pressures to conform to notions of feminine respectability rubbed up against the desire to provide for family security and comfort in the form of two incomes. Of equal importance to the projection of respectability, argues Cross, was the symbolic expression of working-class self-determination that could be mediated via the acquisition of consumer goods and visible leisure activities such as gardening and home maintenance. Autonomy, as expressed and experienced in the use of domestic leisure, 'was inherently dependent upon income beyond subsistence'.<sup>32</sup> Increasingly, Ernesettle's wives and husbands found that domestic respectability could coexist alongside, indeed be facilitated by, women's waged work.

Ernesettle's new factories, even whilst they perpetuated the male domination of the workplace, simultaneously offered opportunities that undermined outdated notions of the impropriety of women's work. A key local employer, Bush Radio, opened for business in 1949 following a ceremony attended by movie mogul J. Arthur Rank (owner of Bush Radio's parent company), and local dignitary Lady Nancy Astor. The operation on Northolt Avenue initially manufactured *wireless* sets in the 1940s, introducing black and white, then colour televisions in the 1950s and 60s, and ultimately producing flat screen televisions until 2009. A pioneer of television technology in the 1950s, the factory's own test gear provided a local television signal even before the BBC began broadcasting a service to Plymouth.<sup>33</sup> The factory expanded several times between 1948 and 1981, gradually acquiring additional plots of land in

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<sup>31</sup> Cross, 1993, op cit., p.49.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Keith Geddes. *The Setmakers. A History of the Radio and Television Industry*. London: The British Radio & Electronic Equipment Manufacturers Association (BREEMA), 1991.

the Ernesettle industrial area to increase production and service consumer demand. In 1968 local news broadcaster Television South West (TSW) celebrated the factory's output of 10,000 televisions per week, and by the 1970s the factory employed over 2000 people and ran a 24 hour operation.<sup>34</sup> Other companies experienced more modest growth. Clatworthy upholsterers arrived in 1951, were bought out by Slumberland in 1957, becoming Vi-spring in 1971, and still operating from their Ernesettle premises to this day. Brown and Sharpe machine parts facility was established in 1957, expanding in 1982 before being sold first to Vickers in 1985, then to Kawasaki Precision Machinery in 1994 who remain in operation. Smith's Crisps established a factory in Ernesettle in 1959, subsequently selling their site to Bush in 1981.<sup>35</sup> Between them these workplaces animated and structured Ernesettle's daily life, their changing shifts creating a local pattern of pedestrian rush-hours as regularly as the school run does today. This visibility in itself helped to de-stigmatize women's work, whilst part-time shifts made it possible to accommodate both domestic and economic needs. Roger Beck recalled a regular procession of 'mothers going down to Smith's crisps to work the evening shift', their occupation becoming a known and accepted part of local life: 'If we found a packet of crisps in those days without the salt in we'd complain to one of the ladies that we knew that she'd been having 40 winks or something!'<sup>36</sup>

Many Ernesettle wives took factory employment locally as growing numbers of married women entered the waged workforce in the 1950s. Their choice reflected the local face of wider national trends, but it was also assisted by conditions of geographic proximity and economic necessity. Demand for unskilled labour generated by the 'explosive growth of electrical engineering, electrical consumer goods, and petro-chemical products',<sup>37</sup> combined with the enticing rewards of consumer goods themselves, and in the decade 1950-60, the total labour force of the nation expanded by 1.5 million, of whom 1.25 million were married women.<sup>38</sup> Bernice Smale was one of these.

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<sup>34</sup> TV South West, 30.04.1968. Report on 10,000 TVs a week at Rank Bush Murphy.

<sup>35</sup> Some dates and details courtesy of Alan Bricknell, unpublished research (2014).

<sup>36</sup> Beck and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>37</sup> Jane Wheelock. *Husbands at Home. The domestic economy in a post-industrial society*. London: Routledge, 1990, p.36.

<sup>38</sup> Oakley, op cit., p.72.

Figure 4.2.



Inside Bush Radio Factory, c. 1948 (above), and 1950s (below). Opportunities in Ernesettle's local factories provided the wherewithal for domestic consumption, fuelling demand for the type of goods that workers themselves produced. These consumer goods in turn served to reinforce ties to family and home. In the process, assumptions about the *natural* sexual division of labour between work and home that had underpinned the design of social welfare were beginning to be destabilized. Photograph courtesy of Bob Mitchelmore, former General Manager, Toshiba Ernesettle, and Lesley Gambleton.



Pushed into Bush by unhappy personal circumstances, Bernice found herself obliged to look for work when her husband left her and their three children.

I got a job. Because he was going to give us four pound a week, so I figured money would be short. So I went down to Bush, Rank and what it was then, and got a job. And I was earning, with bonus about seven pound a week. Anyway, six weeks went by and I think he realised that [...] his wife was earning good money and working and doing very nicely you see [...] and he went down on his knees and said "take me back". [...] So anyway, yes of course, and back he came...<sup>39</sup>

The experience was an eye-opener for both parties, and after Peter Smale returned, the couple found that the benefits of having two incomes suited them both. Yet as Bernice elaborated, the decision to work was not an obvious choice, but rather the outcome of necessity and negotiation.

I wouldn't have gone if it hadn't been for [Peter leaving], I was getting sufficient money from Peter – [I was] a good manger I suppose. But I mean to say, when I had to go, I realised the benefits of having your own money. Peter no longer doled it out to me. [...] I'd learnt what it really meant to have money of my own. [...] So what he decided was, after a bit, he decided we'd live on my money you see. We'd live on my money. And [...] he would buy meat, and he paid the rent, and he paid the TV, a few things like that you see. And the bulk of the stuff I paid for. It didn't worry me – I'd never had much in the first place. We were doing very nicely after all.<sup>40</sup>

For Bernice, earning a wage represented autonomy – money was no longer 'doled out' to her, but was indisputably her own. Furthermore, it appears to have conferred a reversal of patriarchal conventions: Bernice identified herself as the primary provider: 'we'd live on my money', whilst her husband contributed a 'few things' in a supplementary fashion. The episode indicates that far from being threatened by female economic empowerment, some men welcomed the addition to the family income – an addition that, in this case at least, meant that they kept more of their own money to themselves! Thus, individual families devised their own household strategies for negotiating around the dominant ideals of masculine provider and feminine domestic respectability, increasingly favouring the material rewards that dual incomes provided.

For working-class families the household economy served a dual purpose of enhancing consumer power and providing an additional fall-back of social

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<sup>39</sup> Smale, op cit.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

security during times of hardship. The financial contributions that young people made to the family budget were also important in this respect, shaping attitudes not only to work, but also to education. Academic ambition meant postponing a child's monetary contribution to the household, a high price to pay in large families in particular.<sup>41</sup> School leavers were expected to contribute towards their keep as soon as they started earning, although sums varied from family to family – often indexed to household size. Pat Pott, the eldest daughter amongst six siblings recalled that she 'earned two pounds seven and six, Mum had the two pound, I had the seven and six [...] whereas my friend who went to school with me, she did the same thing, she was allowed to keep the two pounds and her mum had the [rest]!'<sup>42</sup> Thus, children in large families could suffer a double blow to their social prospects, deprived of educational mobility and of the power to consume on equal terms with their peers. Whilst the welfare benefits of the post-war settlement reduced the absolute necessity of household earning strategies for social security purposes, they were not sufficient to make these strategies redundant. Nourished by habits of caution and thrift developed in harder times, and perhaps also by the growth of consumer aspiration, parents of Ernesettle's first generation continued to favour employment rather than education for their offspring.

### **'I gotta have plimsolls' – education and employment prospects**

Anthony Heath's statistical analysis of social mobility measured in terms of educational qualification over the period 1930-1970 shows a relatively modest reduction in class inequalities, suggesting that successive education reforms in the post-war period have had at best a marginal impact.<sup>43</sup> Whilst the tripartite education system (grammar, technical, and secondary schools), introduced as a result of the 1944 Education Act, did create a new social trajectory for some children, most experienced no change in their educational opportunities.<sup>44</sup> Joanna Bourke argues that this has to be viewed in the light of working-class financial priorities. 'Educational policy failed to convince

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<sup>41</sup> Bourke, op cit., p.120.

<sup>42</sup> Patricia Pott (nee White). Interview by Hilary Kolinsky and Rob Fraser, 13/04/2010.

<sup>43</sup> Anthony Heath. 'Education since 1945'. In *Britain since 1945*, by Jonathan Hollowell (ed.), 296-312. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003, pp.307 and 311.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.297.

working-class parents that education was the key to upward social mobility. Indeed, much education policy resulted in a fall in the economic ladder as the household was deprived of the earnings of children.<sup>45</sup> With employment opportunities literally on the doorstep in Ernesettle, the logic of educational aspiration must have seemed hard to fathom for the likes of Pat Pott's mother, who, despite the grammar school pass obtained by her daughter, allowed Pat to transfer to the new Ernesettle Secondary School.

I passed to go to the grammar school and I went there for a year, and then the new school was built so my brother and Jean all moved to the new school, so I wanted to come out from the grammar and go to the new school [with] all these new friends that I made. And my mum let me do it, [...] so then I went down to the local school. [...] They all went down there and I just wanted to be a part of that.<sup>46</sup>

Educational mobility could also prove to be a jarring social experience as children raised in the shelter of Ernesettle's comfortable but modest circumstances were suddenly exposed to their economic inferiority. The experience of going to school outside Ernesettle gave many young people a window onto levels of material wealth of which they were previously unaware, and in some cases could not match. Jean Darlby for example, was shocked to discover a friend who lived on Crownhill Road (outside the estate) had a telephone. Free school meals were a more obvious giveaway of the relative social status of pupils. Pat Pott recalled that 'you used to have to give your dinner money [to the teacher] and they'd call you up to give your dinner money and I didn't have any dinner money [to give], so I was always a bit conscious of the fact'.<sup>47</sup> Clothing was another source of social betrayal, with specialist uniforms a compulsory feature of technical and grammar schools, as Pat learned on her first day at Devonport High School for Girls:

The day I started Devonport High I can remember getting on the bus, and obviously it was a brown uniform [and they] used to have the brown gabardine macs then, but I didn't have one. I had like a black and white rubbery plastic [thing] and I was so embarrassed because I went to school on the first day and *everybody* had the full uniform and I had like this horrible [coat].<sup>48</sup>

For Ernesettle children who went to grammar school, comparison with wealthier peers could cause social discomfort, flagging up shortcomings in

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<sup>45</sup> Bourke, op cit., p.120.

<sup>46</sup> Pott, op cit.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

food, accent, deportment, and clothing. Uniform requirements put pressure on parents as much as it did pupils. Pat Pott's mother may have shared her child's sensitivities, agreeing to a school transfer for both sympathetic and pragmatic reasons: sparing embarrassment as well as money. Others were more militant. Dennis Murphy, whose 11-plus pass took him to Widey Technical School, recalled, with his brother Pete, that uniform was especially contentious in the Murphy family, but father Paddy took an uncompromising stance:

Dennis: I had to have uniform at Widey. The Headmaster, Hanger Harris, said that nobody was allowed to walk on the parquet floor with their shoes on, you had to wear plimsolls. I never had any plimsolls. Pete: that was something with father, he wouldn't buy us plimsolls. Dennis: so I when I said "I gotta have plimsolls for school", [he said] "you're not having any plimsolls". I said "well the Headmaster says." [So] he was up that bloody school. [And] he got a pair of plimsolls! [from the school].

Pete: yeah *he* got 'em. Now doing PE [at Ernesettle Secondary] I didn't have any plimsolls. I used to do a lot of running, cross-country, I was quite good at cross country. I used to run barefoot. The only saving grace was we had an English runner called Bruce Tunnel and he represented Britain in 1960 Olympics and he ran barefoot, and I think that's the only way I got away with it was that – like Bruce Tunnel!<sup>49</sup>

The pattern of Pete and Dennis's subsequent working lives was illustrative of the determining influence of the tripartite system. To Pete's succession of unskilled jobs, Dennis had, in contrast, spent all his working life in one establishment rising to the position of local manager. Technical schools provided routes into skilled manual and clerical jobs, secondary schools into unskilled roles, and grammar schools into middle-class professions. Many schools had established relationships with local workplaces and tailored their educational output towards specific skills requirements. As Terry Whiting wrote in a letter to the local newspaper, Widey School 'had large, well-lit, purpose-built rooms for technical drawing, physics, chemistry, mechanics, art, geography and a well-stocked library', and many Widey boys 'went on to serve engineering apprenticeships in the Dockyard'.<sup>50</sup> Like the 11-plus before

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<sup>49</sup> Murphy and Murphy, op cit.

<sup>50</sup> Whiting, Terry. *Old technical school prepared us for life*. 17/10/ 2011. Available at: <http://www.plymouthherald.co.uk/Old-technical-school-prepared-life/story-13579602-detail/story.html#ixzz3hqJ6YGtF> (accessed 12/07/2015).

it, the dockyard entrance exam established a hierarchy of career opportunity.

As Malcolm Ward told me,

thousands [took it], yeah thousands. It depended how far up you passed, depended what job you got. The higher up you passed the better the apprenticeship. But I never went for apprenticeship, I just, I knew my limitations!<sup>51</sup>

For Malcolm, the failure to make apprentice grade was no bar, however, to earning *good money*. Working ‘on the tugs’, Malcolm’s pay for the tough and often unpleasant labour of cleaning and re-supplying ships’ fuel tanks, was far in excess of the entry-level wage for an apprentice. But what the young apprentice sacrificed in terms of ready cash was compensated for in long-term job security. Having obtained a high pass in the dockyard exam, Charlie Sells entered the yard as an apprentice pattern maker aged 16 in 1948.<sup>52</sup> He remained there until his retirement and left with a good pension that helped to complete the repayment of his right-to-buy mortgage and secure his home in Ernesettle as his own.

For those who went to secondary school, the lowest tier in the tripartite system, work opportunities tended to be in unskilled jobs. Ernesettle Secondary, being located directly opposite the Bush factory, fed the operation with an annual supply of school-leavers. The school also served the Berkertex factory on Honicknowle, sending suitable girls to Saturday morning classes there in advance of their school leaving date, the best of whom were then offered jobs. In these ways school curricula mirrored and reproduced the sexual division of labour that pertained in the workplace, socialising boys and girls into gendered activities such as technical drawing or sewing that would be useful in their working lives. Such lessons were also derived from daily life at home. In many small ways the factories featured in the lives of Ernesettlers from childhood. Youngsters scavenged the Bush bins for treasure, gathering the multi-coloured plastic coatings stripped from wires and threading them into bracelets, or venturing down to Smith’s Crisps where over-flavoured snacks could be begged by the sackload! One former resident told me: ‘there’s not a kid in Ernesettle that hasn’t worked for Bush!’ explaining that in the 1950s and 60s, it was not uncommon for girls on the production line to take home small

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<sup>51</sup> Ward and Ward, op cit.

<sup>52</sup> Sells, op cit.

Figure 4.3.



The tripartite education system shaped children's working destinies from the age of 11. In Ernesettle there was an obvious geographic relationship between school and work, as well as formal channels through which pupils were inducted into the skills of local manufacturing workplaces. Nevertheless, in an era of full employment many young people experienced work as an abundance of opportunity, trying on different jobs for size and making active choices informed by relative wages, working hours, social life, and locality.

Ernesettle Secondary School buildings (top), and pupils (below). Photographs courtesy of Plymouth City Museum, ref. njo\_JF013-1, and njo\_JF014, and Malcolm Warner.

articles of piece work in the evenings, their younger brothers and sisters helping with this work for pennies or favours.<sup>53</sup> With children socialised into the obligations of the household economy at a young age, it is no surprise that many youngsters sought factory work there the day after leaving school. In the case of the Bush factory, their daily commute was altered only by terminating on the opposite side of the road.

In addition, schools also prepared young people for jobs that matched their social class – a fact that by the 1960s was attracting vocal criticism from the political left for determining children’s occupational prospects at a young age.<sup>54</sup> However, as we have seen, the relationship between education and social mobility was complex: parental, geographic, and social factors conspired to push Ernesettle children towards work, which in itself was a valued part of working-class culture. It is therefore, important not to project back onto the 1950s and 60s the value that *academic* qualification has taken on in contemporary society. For the children of the post-war baby boom, the quality of everyday life in adulthood was not necessarily dependent on education: full employment provided abundant and reasonably well-rewarded opportunities for all workers – even the unskilled school-leaver. For young people coming of age in the late 1950s and early 1960s, jobs, as Malcolm Ward told me 'were ten a penny'.<sup>55</sup> Andy Strike agreed: 'there were so many jobs around, *The Herald* used to be full of 'em, you could walk in any factory and get a job if you wanted one'.<sup>56</sup> The post-war generation were no longer haunted by the spectre of unemployment as their parents had been in the 1930s. As a result, they could take greater risks, moving on from jobs that bored them. The picture which emerges from oral memory of these decades is not necessarily of the job-for-life career whose passing was later lamented in the 1980s and 90s (although for some, in the dockyard, for example, this path did exist), but rather of a labour market that was sufficiently buoyant to absorb redundancies and to present new opportunities – as one door closed another opened; women, although their choices tended to be more limited by parallel responsibilities of childcare, experienced similar employment mobility.

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<sup>53</sup> Informal conversation between Hilary Kolinsky and anon. Ernesettle resident, 14/05/2014.

<sup>54</sup> Heath, op cit., p.297.

<sup>55</sup> Ward and Ward, op cit.

<sup>56</sup> Strike, 2013, op cit.

In this context of full employment, educational qualifications were a much less valued currency than they are today. Pat Sterry, for example, studied and qualified for clerical work, but chose instead to take a job at Clarks shoe factory in Whitleigh, working in several manufacturing jobs before later settling on the pub trade as landlady of her own club.<sup>57</sup> As more women and young people like Pat brought a second, third, or even fourth income into the household, a good standard of living was possible for all, regardless of education.

In Ernesettle then, there was evidence to support Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's assertion, made in a speech in July 1957, that 'most of our people have never had it so good'.<sup>58</sup> Jobs were easy to come by, women were moving beyond the confining bounds of domesticity, and consumer power was increasing. However, this state of advancing contentment is not something which can be directly credited to Macmillan's policies, or indeed to any political party. Importantly, the communal culture of the Ernesettle neighbourhood, itself an outcome of interwoven discursive and experiential factors (see chapters 2 and 3), helped to sustain family earning power and, in turn, the culture of the workplace reinforced neighbourly solidarity.

### **'I'll give you a lift into work' – work and neighbouring**

In most families the household economy was not a closed circuit, but relied at least partially on the support of neighbours. This was especially the case in families where both parents worked outside the home. Gloria Oxland's parents, for example, benefitted from the help of the Brownings next door: 'if my mum was at work Sheila's mum would look after us'; and if Sheila's mum was also at work 'Mrs Jarwood'd be home and she'd keep an eye!'<sup>59</sup> For Kathy Docwra, several 'Uncles' and 'Aunties' (not blood relatives but the extended family of the neighbourhood), helped her mother and father maintain full-time jobs to support a household with five children:

Well when my mum was still working, Aunty Dot next door, Dorothy she was called, we used to call her Aunty Dot, she used to give us our tea. So we'd have to come home from school and go in there. So you know, you were looked after in a sense, even though you had your key

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<sup>57</sup> Sterry, op cit.

<sup>58</sup> Hennessy, Peter. *Having it so Good. Britain in the Fifties*. London: Penguin, 2007, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> Browning, Toms (nee Oxland), and Fraser, op cit.



on a string on the door, we'd have to go in there and have our tea. 'Cause probably we would be home at four, half past three, four, and of course my mum wouldn't be in 'til six. So we'd have to have our tea done for us. We used to have our tea about half past four, five o'clock. So we'd all be fed by the time my mum come home.<sup>60</sup>

In these instances, neighbouring facilitated wage-earning and was a vital support to the acquisition of dual incomes for families with young children. The closeness and reciprocity that this implied was underlined by the familial terms that Kathy Docwra used to describe these neighbourly relationships.

Child minding was often offered by next-door neighbours, but equally close relationships with friends in other parts of Ernesettle were also described in oral memories. These friendships were often forged through the shared experience of work. The overlapping of neighbourhood and work sociability was particularly visible in the time/space of the daily commute. Shared journeys on public or private transport provided a routine space and time for forging social relationships with co-workers, and could even influence the choice of job. Malcolm Ward took a job 'on the tugs' because 'Mr Daw across the road, [...] said, "if you get the job I'll give you a lift into work everyday". [It] saved the bus fare!<sup>61</sup> Moreover, for Malcolm, Mr Daw's suggestion led to lucrative work: 'They were on good money, them men on the tugs. [...] Where everyone else was getting nine, ten pound a week, they were on 12, 13, maybe 14'.<sup>62</sup> In the form of shared transport and tip-offs for job opportunities, neighbours facilitated small and large financial gains. They also helped friends to save time – a valuable family resource, especially for mothers. Although a dedicated bus service shuttled between Ernesettle and the Dockyard at peak times, Kathy Docwra's mother, for example, preferred to ride pillion with 'Uncle' Albert to get to her job in the dockyard canteen:

We had friends who lived up in to Manston Close, Barbara and Albert (I always remember him as Uncle Albert and Aunty Barbara, and they had six children), and he used to, I can remember him coming down, picking my mum up of a morning to take her to work, cause he worked in the dockyard as well.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Docwra, op cit.

<sup>61</sup> Ward and Ward, op cit.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Docwra, op cit.

Commuting gave temporal structure to the daily existence of the life of the neighbourhood. Dockyard and factory hours set the timetable of activity in Ernesettle streets with an influx and outflow of people on foot, and later, in cars, at opening or closing times and lunch hours. As Rob Fraser recalled of the 1960s: 'the only time you saw a car in the street was when the factory came out'.<sup>64</sup> The converse of work time was of course leisure time, and many Ernesettlers chose to spend (at least part of) their leisure with friends made at work. Workplaces actively promoted camaraderie, hosting a thriving social life: Bush had both men's and ladies football teams, and family-friendly social events such as Christmas parties, which were an annual favourite with children.

Factory and family life also overlapped in social activities which cemented friendships formed at work or commuting, often involving wider family, or in some cases, the whole street. Graham Nicholas explained that in North Weald Gardens residents used to go out to 'dances and dos [together] because one of the blokes worked in the dockyard, about four of the families all went to the dockyard dos'.<sup>65</sup> Some 'dos' were organised for more sombre reasons. When tragedy struck at work bonds of fellowship became especially evident as colleagues and neighbours rallied round to support affected families. Mrs Ashton explained that 'we put on dos to raise funds for [the] families' of her husband's colleagues, construction workers who drowned whilst employed on the Tamar suspension bridge. An accident Mr Ashton narrowly avoided himself.

What it was, [...] I went down to the boat, [...] and I said to my mate, I said, "I ain't going across in that boat". I said "it's full of gear" – it had jack hammers and hoses in there. So we ran for the ferry, the ferry was just going out, and [...] went across on the ferry. [...] A young chap came out and said [...], "the boat's gone down". And I could see the boat just coming in between the towers like you know. [...] That's when he went down. [...] Apparently they say a couple of them was rocking the boat as well, and the boat was only that much out of the water. Too many, too many men in there, too many. So I had to go back – they wanted me to have a look through and see if I knew if there was any men missing. Well, I knew Brian wasn't there. [...] There was about seven I think [...] went down.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Browning, Toms (nee Oxland), and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>65</sup> Nicolas, op cit.

<sup>66</sup> Ashton and Ashton, op cit.

Figure 4.4.



Large workplaces developed their own social scene, sustaining worker solidarity whilst simultaneously underscoring connections to place. Above, twins Angela and Lorna Gambleton with their mother on a lunch break, and below, Angela with the Bush ladies 11-a-side football team. Photographs courtesy of Lesley Gambleton.



Factory, family, and neighbourly life overlapped in the daily commute. It also overlapped at the annual workplace *do*, such as the Bush Radio children's Christmas party. Photograph courtesy of Pat Pott.

Manual labourers, especially those in construction trades, were particularly exposed to danger, but tragedies of this kind could be galvanising events. Fund-raising 'dos' gave the community an opportunity to come together and demonstrate solidarity through charity. Such direct action was also motivated by the convention of reciprocity – it was a comforting thought to the male provider that his wife and children might be similarly supported should his own life be endangered at work. Under these circumstances of closely overlapping work and neighbourhood lives, it is not surprising that powerful loyalties developed. As Rosemary Compton has argued, the experience of work 'generate[d] the consciousness of solidarity and cohesion with other employees, which has been conveniently described as the identity of *class*'.<sup>67</sup> Danger in the workplace was one aspect of worker experience that actively constituted the collective identity of the working class. But whilst colleague/neighbour loyalties were the source of a reiteration of worker collectivity, conditions of full employment were simultaneously weakening the link between occupational identity and class. For unskilled men in particular, their relationship to work was becoming increasingly transitory and mobile.

### **'Dad was General Municipal' – pre-war working identities**

Full employment and the safety net of social welfare generated opportunities for baby-boom teenagers that were unheard of for their parents' generation. It created an employment landscape of widened career choices in which young people could test their options and ultimately find work suited to their circumstances and inclinations. An abundance of opportunity also re-shaped working men's identities, weakening the link between occupation and sense of self, a transition that can be glimpsed by comparing the different attitudes and language of pre and post-war generations, and particularly articulated by oral history participants with regard to the dockyard.

Throughout the period of this study Devonport Dockyard was the largest employer in the city, maintaining a civilian labour force of around 20,000 from the end of the Second World War to the mid 1990s, and accounting, in the late 60s, for 28% of all male employees in the Plymouth area and 45% of the

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<sup>67</sup> Compton, Rosemary. 'Consumption and class analysis'. In *The Consumer Reader*, 157-162. London: Routledge, 2003, p.160.

economic activity of the city as a whole.<sup>68</sup> The proportion of men engaged in dockyard work was reflected on a micro scale within individual Ernesettle families: in the Luscombe household, for example, in a family of 11, three out of five sons and their father were all employed there.<sup>69</sup>

Charlie Sells (born 1932) started his apprenticeship as a pattern maker in the dockyard in 1948. For Charlie, this occupation became a key part of self-identity—literally providing a label with which to describe oneself.<sup>70</sup> In our interview, this nominal vocabulary was also used to designate the occupational identity of his friends (photographer, baker, or engineer) step-father (slinger's labourer) and even his wife ('a very good wire woman she was'). The technical and manual skills that were vital to Charlie's career progression were mirrored by the model-making hobbies of his leisure hours (see also chapter 5), and were respected and admired in friends who possessed valuable manual skills.

A corollary to occupational identity, especially for dockyardies, was political affiliation – particularly union and Labour party membership. In workplaces of this scale, political influence was a vital factor in sustaining workload, and local Members of Parliament who were successful in lobbying for Dockyard work, achieved the status of Plymouth heroes. In the late 1960s MP for Devonport and then Navy Minister Dr David Owen, was instrumental in the government decision to make Devonport an operational base for nuclear submarines.<sup>71</sup> A guest of honour at the crowning of Miss Ernesettle during the Ernesettle Carnival of 1974, the strength of ill-feeling that Dr Owen subsequently inspired when he defected from Labour to form a new political party in the 1980s was later recalled by interviewee Pete Murphy:

Oh don't talk about David Owen with father! He was fine when he was Labour but then he sold out didn't he, he went SDP. And of course when he left the Labour and went to this SDP, he come knocking on the door and the old man wouldn't let him in the door!<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> South West Economic Planning Council. 'Plymouth Area Study'. Plymouth, 1969; and Brian Chalkley, David Dunkerley, Peter Gripaios (eds.). *Plymouth, Maritime City in Transition*. Newton Abobott: David and Charles, c.1991.

<sup>69</sup> Luscombe, Luscombe, and Luscombe, op cit.

<sup>70</sup> Sells, op cit.

<sup>71</sup> Chris Robinson. *A History of Devonport*. Plymouth: Pen and Ink Publishing, 2010.

<sup>72</sup> Murphy and Murphy, op cit.

Not only could political influence bring in government contracts, but the parallel loyalties of union representation were the primary route of mediation between workers and management, with wage bargaining being the standard mechanism by which workers wages were agreed. For the older generation – those who might remember the Depression and its consequences – the importance of this collective representation in advocating on behalf of the workers was reflected in a vehemently expressed loyalty towards their particular union. Indeed, this could be of such significance to workers' sense of identity that it was expected to be passed down the generations, as Pete and Dennis Murphy's recalled of their father, Paddy: '[Dad] was General Municipal – [he] was choked 'cause I joined the Transport and General!'<sup>73</sup> Tellingly, the terms in which Pete and Dennis elaborated on their own relationships to the union were much less emphatic than those they attributed to their father: *he 'was a unionist'*; but Pete only 'joined' the Transport and General, whilst Dennis, when offered the chance to be a union rep at General Municipal 'didn't go much on that to be honest with you'.<sup>74</sup> In parallel with the decline of occupation as a defining node of masculine identity, close identification with unionism appears to have also been waning for the post-war generation.

### **'I stuck it a month' – post-war working identities**

A correspondence between worker and personal identity was less clearly marked for the baby-boom generation. Born in 1950, Malcolm Ward, for example, moved on from his early career on the tugs through a number of jobs, none of which were described in terms that would identify him closely with his work.

I went on tugs in the dockyard when I first left [school]. Then I got in a bit of trouble in my teens! My uncle fixed up a job for me in the merchant navy and I never looked back from that. I had a few years in the merchant navy, learnt independence and how to look out for myself. Came out, then I went in the dockyard. Had a few years in the dockyard. Came out, dad taught me to drive, I went on the buses, had a few years on the buses. And then that bored me, and I went taxi-ing then, and I finished off my working life taxi-ing.<sup>75</sup>

Malcolm's workplaces were described in terms that were separate from

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ward and Ward, op cit.

himself. Despite his various occupations he did not identify himself as 'seaman', 'a yardy', or 'a taxi driver', but rather these were jobs that he experienced, 'had a few years in', literal and metaphorical vehicles that he 'went on'. Other men of Malcolm's generation recounted similar experiences, listing a succession of jobs with barely a pause for breath. For most of Pete Murphy's working life jobs were transitory, change precipitated by either boredom or redundancy:

I went into the TV factory for six months and [was] made redundant. Joined the Co-op, was there for five years. Worked in quite a few shops at this end of the city, and a mobile shop for about 18 months. Left, went in the dockyard. Was there for three years, bored out me mind. Left there, went to the TV factory again. Working nights. I stuck it a month couldn't stand it anymore. Er, where'd I go then? Oh Co-op milk. I tried that for a month didn't like that. Then I worked for Unigate foods where I was sort of like a rep more than anything, selling to shops. That was a good job but made redundant again. Then I worked for National Carriers for about six years. Got to drive the big 40 footers that was lovely. Redundant again – I've had me fair share of redundancies. And then for about 20 odd years I worked for Nurdin and Peacock cash and carry and then it was Booker, 'til I had to give up with me ticker. So that's my working life in a nutshell.<sup>76</sup>

There is no trace in these accounts of psychic scars like those left by unemployment in the 1930s which left men embarrassed and emasculated. Instead, full employment seems to have created opportunities to try different work, or to escape getting *stuck in a rut*. Even redundancies were treated with a certain nonchalance. This new-found flexibility was made possible by a combination of circumstances: first, the economy itself, which grew by an average of 2.8% per year for the period 1951-1973, creating a constant demand for labour; second, the safety net of welfare which provided cash benefits to the unemployed; and finally, the financial contributions that women made to the household, giving additional security of income during temporary periods of male unemployment.<sup>77</sup> Taken together, these factors opened up a fault line between pre and post-war masculine attitudes to work, de-coupling identity from occupation.

This fault-line manifested in intergenerational tension. In his oral history work with Canadian fathers of the 1950s, Robert Rutherford observes that '[f]or

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<sup>76</sup> Murphy and Murphy, op cit.

<sup>77</sup> N. F. R. Crafts and Nicholas Woodward. *The British Economy Since 1945*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1991, p.7.



many fathers too work demands were satisfied to pursue what was considered to be responsible fatherhood. [...] Fulfilling the drive for security was a sign of a father's masculinity, not its erosion'.<sup>78</sup> The adoption of a responsible attitude to work could lead to authoritarian parenting and tension within families as fathers tried to instil in their sons the importance of security; whilst sons viewed the permanency of a job for life with suspicion. Some, like Graham Nicholas, rebelled:

Me father got me a job in the dockyard. He said "that's where you're going for security". [Well, you] never argued with your parents did you? [So] I went and did it. [But] I swore at somebody I was working with. He told me father at the gate, and when I come home me father said "what you been doing today?" "Nothing". "Was you cheeky to one of your elders?" And I thought, "hang on". [...] So I thought I don't like this I'm going to get out. So I went back, gave my weeks' notice in.<sup>79</sup>

In heavy industrial sites such as the dockyard, deference to elders was a necessary part of the culture of manual labour, a social protection against the dangers of the workplace. As former National Union of Mineworkers leader, Chris Kitchen explained of 'the pit': '[t]he code of honour that existed underground was part of the fabric of the community as well. [...] You wouldn't upset an old guy because he would be the same one you'd rely on in the pit to protect your life at work'.<sup>80</sup> However, for young men like Graham, there was a growing suspicion of this code of deference. Was this because safety at the dockyard had been significantly improved by union involvement, or because the security of government welfare had undermined the necessity for worker co-dependency? Graham's articulation of his distaste touched on several causes including a culture of entitlement in the dockyard, as well as the relations within the home that it seemed to produce. The very walls of the dockyard seemed to Graham to represent a culture that was static and immovable, harnessed to social conventions that were unfair and outdated:

I didn't want to go into the dockyard – that's an institute I didn't like. The wall, the institute. You used to hear stories of people walking round doing nothing. I didn't want that, 11 year, 12 year period in the dockyard. You seen some of the men coming out there and they looked old. Me Grandad worked in there and he looked old.

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<sup>78</sup> Robert Rutherford. 'Three Faces of Fatherhood in Post-War Canada'. In *What is Masculinity? Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World*, by John, H. Arnold and Sean Brady (eds.): 323-346. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p.343.

<sup>79</sup> Nicholas, op cit.

<sup>80</sup> Kitchen, cited in Jones, 2011, op cit., p. 55.

Grandparents to me in they days were old – not like today! I used to go down and see me gran and think, "she's old". [You'd have to] sit still, not move. Me Grandad'd come home [and] everything got out the way, his teas on the table. Me Grandmother never used to eat really, he used to come first. They used to in those days didn't they [...] That was the way it was: he man of the house was and everybody else was second citizens.<sup>81</sup>

In Graham's account of the life of the yardie, work was monotonous and pointless, and home life offered little recompense, emotionally impoverished by the deference demanded by the male breadwinner. This was not the future that Graham envisioned for himself, indicating a rejection not only of an outdated culture of work, but of its gendered corollary in the home. Graham was also deterred by the dockyard's reputation for 'people walking round doing nothing' – a reputation that was validated in official documents. In a 1968 study published in the Royal Geographical Society, Jean Braithwaite stated that 'it appears that the dockyard is still employing more men than it really needs'.<sup>82</sup> Following interviews with executives at 21 industrial firms that had moved to Plymouth since the war, Braithwaite found that:

Most companies, including some who stated that the prospect of using redundant dockyard labour attracted them to the city in the first place, appear unwilling to employ men who have worked in the dockyard for any length of time. They recognize that they may well be highly qualified, but feel that they cannot afford the dockyard outlook of 'two men doing the work of one' to be carried into their firms.<sup>83</sup>

Braithwaite's observation records an increasing tension between the productivity objectives of business, and the collective power of organised labour. This power could be used to exert workers rights beyond the officially endorsed remit of union bargaining. In Graham's brief encounter with dockyard life, this was confirmed by the dubious practices he encountered in his final week there: 'I had to sign for returning stuff I never had, pneumatic drill I never had, tools I never had!'.<sup>84</sup> This was a darker side of dockyard culture. Other former yardies reinforced this picture of a culture of scams and fiddles, creaming materials and equipment off the stock sheet for private use

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<sup>81</sup> Nicolas, op cit.

<sup>82</sup> Braithwaite, Jean. 'The Post-War Industrial Development of Plymouth: An Example of the Effect of National Industrial Location Policy'. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (Royal Geographical Society), no. 45 (September 1968): 39-50, p.42.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p.46.

<sup>84</sup> Nicolas, op cit.

or the black market. Their reluctance to 'go on the record' highlighting the transgressive nature of a reportedly common practice. The level of average wages in the dockyard might go some way towards explaining this. A 1969 report put dockyard earnings for 1965-67 at 8% below the average for the city, although steps had been taken by 1969 to equalise this pay gap.<sup>85</sup> In such a context, scams provided a supplementary income and their widespread level of acceptance could be interpreted as an informal manifestation of social solidarity. However, the prevalence of 'fiddles' could also be read as the exploitation of worker power. Over time, the working men's code of honour and the institutionalised protection of men's jobs could evolve into a culture of entitlement that included not only rights of fair wages and a 40 hour week, but further, into the private appropriation of company stock and time. Worse was to come: with the productivity crises of the late 1970s and 1980s, the dubious reputation of workers in large unionised industries were grist to the mill of political manipulation, aiding the dismantling of union power and undoing many of the social gains the unions had created.

### **'I used to chase the money' – work and mobility**

With the weakening relevance of job security and occupational identity, men could focus on other employment goals, forging identities in new ways. For Andy Strike, who, like many of his contemporaries, moved through multiple jobs in his lifetime, the goal was ready cash: 'I went everywhere: I done so many jobs it's unbelievable – 44 jobs I've had! I used to chase the money!'<sup>86</sup> The experience of relative affluence generated by full employment led to the fulfilment of consumer desires, altering attitudes to the value of political representation. When I asked Andy, 'was politics part of your life?' he replied:

I think not so much then, because like I say [for] everybody if you wanted a job could get a job and they weren't poor. You know you could always get a job somewhere. [...] So nobody would be really poor, you know. I mean you didn't have what kids have got nowadays. You didn't have so much, you didn't have computers you didn't have this, fair enough. But I think if they were available at the time you would've had em, it's only 'cause they weren't there. So I think that that side of it [politics] it wouldn't have come into it because people were fairly well satisfied.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> South West Economic Planning Council, op cit.

<sup>86</sup> Strike, 2013, op cit.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

For Andy, political representation was unnecessary 'because people were fairly well satisfied', specifically in relation to consumer goods. In Andy's opinion, although computers and present-day consumer durables weren't available at that time, if they had been, a young person in the 1960s 'would've had 'em', if you 'weren't poor' you could buy whatever you desired. This aspect of post-war prosperity and participation in the consumer economy signalled another change in the expression of working-class identity, an identity that Gary Cross has suggested 'was maintained through possession rather than production'.<sup>88</sup> Consumer goods served as a measure of rising affluence, noted through the gradual arrival of fridges, televisions, and cars in Ernesettle's homes and streets. These goods served pragmatic needs, but they also performed a symbolic function, announcing family respectability as evidence of hard work and saving. As Cross notes, 'the man who worked to pay for an automobile, a refrigerator, or a radio was contributing to a family identity'.<sup>89</sup> The car was an especially important signifier of commitment to family, demonstrating not only material prosperity, but in many cases, the culmination of a regime of financial discipline as Sheila Browning recalled:

I remember when my dad got his first car – turquoise Vauxhall Victor. And I can remember his number plate: TCO 578. [...] I remember him having a box and he nailed it down, and he just did a little slit up the top, and any time he had spare money he put it down in the box. And then eventually he opened it, and counted it up and we had enough for a car, second-hand car. And that's how he bought that car. I can see that wooden box now. I must've been about 15, 16 at the time.<sup>90</sup>

The car stimulated new relationships to the geographies of work and leisure, it also bespoke consumer power. For historian and critic of French modernity, Kristen Ross, the car is '*the* commodity form as such in the 20th century'.<sup>91</sup> The embodiment of Taylorisation (the assembly line, vertical integration of production, the interchangeability of workers, the standardization of tools and materials'), – its production conditioned both the experience of work and the consumption goal of workers' everyday lives.<sup>92</sup> This goal took some time to be universally achieved. Ross observes that in the 1960s 'the automobile occupied an intermediate status [...] [n]either a fantastic, luxurious dream nor

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<sup>88</sup> Cross, 1993, op cit., p.149.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p.149.

<sup>90</sup> Browning, Toms (nee Oxland), and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>91</sup> Ross, op cit., p.19.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p.19.

a “necessary commodity”, an element of survival, the car had become a project: what one was going to buy next'.<sup>93</sup> The street by street arrival of cars in Ernesettle exhibited and fuelled this possessive project: Mr Ashton and Mrs Ashton were proud to have 'the second car on The Green', one of only five in Ernesettle at the time; young Pete and Dennis Murphy were in awe of 'Gibbys' – the Gibsons at no. 27 – who had 'a white mini - AC0 249A', the first car in Hawkinge Gardens.<sup>94</sup>

Beyond the social status of possession, Ross argues that the car 'enacted a revolution in attitudes towards mobility and displacement [...] the centre of a new sublime 'everydayness', a new subjectivity [...] that is everywhere and nowhere'.<sup>95</sup> The result: *disposable man*: 'moveable, available man (and woman) now open to the new demands of the market [...] to the lures of the newly commodified leisure of the countryside and the institution of *les vacances*, access to which is provided by the family car'.<sup>96</sup> Not only did car ownership signal a family's *arrival* in consumer society, it opened up new relationships to work and to leisure through motorized mobility. The work commute was no longer fixed by walkable or cycleable distances or by the bus timetable. The post-war worker could, like Andy Strike, go everywhere, chasing the money *up country*, or even internationally. Potentially this shift could weaken connection to place, replacing an embedded community with a more transitory one, but at least whilst abundant employment opportunities existed locally, Ernesettlers were able to exercise choice.

### **'He wouldn't leave Plymouth' – work, consumption, and settlement**

For many, the lure of cash and travel could not sever connections to family and neighbourhood. Some Ernesettlers made active choices in favour of staying settled. Even Andy Strike, whose 44 jobs had taken him all over the country, is now retired and living within half a mile of where he grew up – the settlement that he sacrificed during his working life has become the reward of his retirement. Andy's experience is not isolated: several oral history participants had either come back to live in the neighbourhood on retirement, or regularly returned for social gatherings. For the baby-boom generation (as

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p.29.

<sup>94</sup> Ashton and Ashton, op cit.; and Murphy and Murphy, op cit.

<sup>95</sup> Ross, op cit., p.22.

<sup>96</sup> Ross, op cit., p.40.

will be described in chapter 5), a sense of a place-based identity found powerful expression in collective practice whether as part of a gang, a choir, a football team, or a social club, and the affiliations of formative years remained meaningful for life, even for those who moved away.

For those who stayed put, the roots that extended through family and kin in the neighbourhood were compelling reasons for seeking local work. Paddy Murphy (father of Pete and Dennis), was offered a job abroad, yet turned it down:

Dennis: what happened they [John Laings builders] wanted him to go to South Africa, when they built that big dam in Africa. They got the contract and they asked him to go there and he wouldn't leave the country cause you had to fly.

Pete: and he didn't have a passport! He had two or three opportunities to go away. He could've gone to Coventry and all sorts like.

Dennis: but he didn't. He wouldn't leave Plymouth. I think he did really like it in Plymouth. And he went down to Brown and Sharpes [instead]. And then he was a security guard at Bush.<sup>97</sup>

Paddy Murphy chose to stay local, opting for a working life that kept him close to his family, and that kept him in fact within the bounds of the Ernesettle neighbourhood. In making this choice, Paddy voted with his feet, choosing family and neighbourhood over (we assume) the financial rewards of working abroad. The expression of choice is significant, a feature of work that has diminished in our contemporary experience of the competitive labour market. Angela McRobbie writes of present-day models of work that 'new patterns of individual mobility have detached individuals from more settled, and thus more socially rooted, ways of existence; there is a replacement of older, again more sociable, working lives with impersonal connections and transactions'.<sup>98</sup> For Ernesettlers of the 1950s and 60s, work could be mobile, but it could also be settled and socially rooted. Whilst transport made workers more moveable, 'more open to the demands of the market', full employment delivered what was effectively a seller's market, in which worker agency was at least equivalent to employer demand.

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<sup>97</sup> Murphy and Murphy, op cit.

<sup>98</sup> Angela McRobbie. 'From Holloway to Hollywood: Happiness at work in the new cultural economy'. In *Cultural Economy*, by Paul du Gay and Michael Pryke (eds.): 97-114. London: Sage, 2002. p.99.

In choosing to stay put, workers like Paddy Murphy weighted the trade-off between money and family/neighbourhood, favouring the latter. The endorsement of family and neighbourhood was replicated even by those who *were* lured away from Ernesettle by the monetary rewards of international work. As detailed in chapter 3, Jean Darlby's father, 'a foreman in the building trade', who worked in Bahrain for six years 'earning ten times the local wage', invested his money in home improvements in the hope of one day buying the family house in Hornchurch Road.<sup>99</sup> Equally of course, increased mobility could serve the family and kin through leisure. Kathy Docwra's parents 'worked all hours going in the week [...] they were very careful [...] My dad was a good saver, very good, and that's how he was able to buy a caravan in the end'.<sup>100</sup> The Docwra's also owned a 'big old American car' that was purchased as much for the shared sociability it provided as it was a status symbol:

It had the runner boards and everything, you could get 14 in there! Honestly! There was another family, Majorie and Jack, and they had five children (there was Barry, Tony, Susan, Gillian and Lorraine were the children) and then there was us five. And they'd all come down our house, mum and dad and five kids, and there'd be my mum and dad and five kids, and we'd all get in that car. Go to the moors, go up on the moors, football, bit of swimming in some stream, have a picnic.<sup>101</sup>

As chapter 5 will show, collective uses of leisure, particularly high-days and holidays, bound Ernesettlers into the life of the neighbourhood. Whilst post-war attitudes to work may have become less rooted and less permanent, the consumer rewards of work, including cars, were absorbed into the space left by weakened occupational identity, to reproduce the still-strong values of home and neighbourhood.

### **'I won't work you too hard' – solidarity, autonomy and the Bush production line**

These values were also evident within Bush Radio, a vital site of sociability and solidarity in the neighbourhood. Women made up a large proportion of the workforce staffing the production lines, and job roles were divided along gender lines with men more likely to be allocated heavier manual work, or supervisory and managerial positions. The staffing structure on the factory

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<sup>99</sup> Darlby, op cit.

<sup>100</sup> Docwra, op cit.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

floor was hierarchical: at the bottom, line hands, mainly women, each performing a discrete task in the assembly of a radio or television set; next the key girl, a quick learner who had experience of every task in the line and could fill in when line hands were absent; next the line supervisor, often female, who kept order on the line and checked over the completed products; followed by the line inspector, often male, who double-checked and tested the completed sets; then the packers, also mainly men, who packed the sets and loaded transport; finally, the foremen who supervised a number of lines in each department. Each department had its own managerial and administration staff, working from an office on the factory floor. A staff canteen and management offices away from the shop floor served top management, accounts, personnel, and catering staff.

To Kathy Docwra (see page 185, this chapter), it was *obvious* that the top supervisors and men in the office should be men – such was the nature of workplaces in the 1950s and 1960s. A sense of how this gendered stratification was produced in practice is gleaned from the example of the role of line inspector – apparently an entry level job which does not appear to have demanded a higher level of skill than other production line work. Andy Strike, had worked in this role as a youngster: 'just went down there. Yeah, you used to just go in and say, "have you got any jobs?" [So] yeah, Line Inspector I started that straight away'.<sup>102</sup> Kathy, however, 'had to learn every job on that line' before she achieved a promotion to key girl, a position that was two grades below that of inspector.<sup>103</sup> Thus, workplace recruitment and promotion policies favoured the male breadwinner, conferring on men higher status and greater wage-earning potential much more quickly than on their female colleagues. Yet at the same time, this hierarchical structure was re-visioning the image of the alienated production line worker – *he* was now a *she*.

On the shop floor, the female-operated production line improvised its own response to this position of subordination, asserting a kind of power through the culture of the shop floor that borrowed from and subverted the sexist objectification of women in the workplace:

Mainly the big heavy jobs was done by the men, so the packers, all the

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.



big sets being lifted by two men and all that was all done. And there was also another part of Bush which was called ITV 2, which was all where all the machine jobs were done. Where they were making the big frames of the sets and stuff before it come over to us. That was nearly all full of men. Because I remember one day for two days I had to go over there and work and it was all men, and I was like "oh no they're going to really take the mick out of me". But they weren't. They took me under their wing and they were really good. But if any men come through our section, young, nice looking men, we used to all whistle! And the girls would give 'em what for! All whistle and go "whoo whoo blue eyes!" and "look at him, he's lovely" and all this we'd go on, you know. They found it intimidating as well! Yeah, yeah definitely. But that's all part of the factory in those days.<sup>104</sup>

Cat calls and whistles performed the collectivity of the group. On a large line like Kathy's which numbered 18 women, this could be a significant composite voice! Female non-line-hands also experienced similar treatment as Pat Pott's, who worked in an administrative role in the factory, recalled:

I worked like I say in the actual factory, in the office – each department had its own office, but all the foremen used to be in the same office with you. But it was lovely down there because all the girls on the shop floor as you called it, the lines, like when you were pregnant, they'd all, the whole of the shop floor would start singing, like something to do with you being pregnant! But it was really, nobody stopped them, they were all working away, but as soon as you walked out they'd start singing a song. And I can remember I used to go blood red, but it was a really nice place to work. [...] It was always a lovely atmosphere.<sup>105</sup>

Whilst the culture of the shop floor may have been intimidating for 'nice looking young men', for Pat it was part of 'a lovely atmosphere' that created 'a really nice place to work'. Group cohesion was vital to the success of the productive operation and practices such as singing served to reinforce fellowship on the lines. Solidarity between workers was equally a result of their co-dependency – bonuses were dependent on meeting targets set by management so the successful production line needed to work as a team. However, there was a delicate balance to strike: work too fast and you would expose others' weaknesses, too slow and you would deplete their wages. Bernice Smale experienced this complex dynamic when, towards the end of her 15 year career in Bush (late 1960s), she was moved to a new line with unfamiliar colleagues and unobtainable targets:

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Pott, op cit.

Now my chargehand knew I was a good worker and there were jobs on that line [where] they couldn't do the targets. So anyway [my chargehand decided] we'll give them jobs to Bernice. So I'm there working like the clappers trying to get these blessed thingamys. [...] I went to her [my chargehand] and I said to her, "I cannot get the targets", I said "they're too hard" [...] Well the point is while I was working away mad like that, that girl behind me said "why is it she can work like that when she's so much older than me and I can't do it?" – in floods of tears, I was upsetting her badly. [...] Now there was a distinct thingamy on that line that there were some girls there that were determined I wasn't going to stop there. [...] The girls, watching me work, went to complain to their union [...] they said "she's not even doing the targets". [...] I felt sick to my stomach. I'd never come up against people behaving in such a fashion. And it wasn't all of that line, it was just a few girls, just a few of them. And they were determined I was to go.<sup>106</sup>

On the lines, solidarity between workers was essential not only to productive output, but also to individual's mental health. Unable to cope with the daily stress of working with people who didn't like her, Bernice went on sick leave and eventually left, following in the footsteps of two other girls who had abandoned the same line in similar circumstances. Our longer interview revealed that Bernice felt the unrealistic expectations of her chargehand were at the root of the antagonism on the line, causing the disintegration of comradely cooperation as the group repeatedly failed to meet impossible targets. The timing of this episode corresponds with increasing pressure on national industrial performance as demand and profits fell, and clearly the effects were being felt on the factory floor.<sup>107</sup> Meeting the combined expectations of management and co-workers in such high-pressure circumstances required skill and compromise. Marilyn Luscombe, who worked at Rank Bush Murphy in the 1970s, articulated a similar dilemma when she decided against becoming a key girl due to the unwanted responsibility:

I had a choice of being what you called a key girl which means that if you were that particular person you could sit in any job and be able to do that job. But I preferred to just know what I was going to be doing each day. So they put me, I was first girl on the line, so you were the person really to get the targets out. Cause anything that I did was bonuses and things. If I didn't deliver they wouldn't get their bonus. So yeah that was quite good, I preferred that. [...] 'Cause I had the chance of a key girl meaning obviously extra money, as well, but I

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<sup>106</sup> Smale, op cit.

<sup>107</sup> Koch, op cit.

didn't want the commitment, the responsibility, so [my supervisor] said "well, you can be the first girl on the lines". So, that's what I did in the end. So yeah, I used to say to the girls sometimes, "Do you want to earn much money this week? If you don't I won't work you too hard!"<sup>108</sup>

By opting instead for the role of first girl, setting the pace of output on the line, Marilyn could take direction from her fellows rather than from her supervisor, meeting bonus targets or slackening pace according to their instructions. In this way, the strong sense of fellowship that was vital to the productivity of the line could also generate a degree of autonomy within the group. Autonomous pace-setting could also be used to speed up production on special occasions. Kathy Docwra explained that in the weeks preceding Christmas, extra effort was made to 'bank' stock so that a Christmas party could be held on what was effectively company time:

At Christmas it was quite funny cause you would do, leading up to Christmas you would do extra say ten sets a day, 20 sets extra, cause they were so fast. And we'd put them and store them. All ready to go yes, all stacked up somewhere. And we'd let the inspectors do all their inspecting as well, and then they'd put em all in boxes out the way, and you'd have all the days production, for that day it would all go up! It's all done. Because the day you went in for your Christmas, last day of work, you had to put in a full days production, or they wouldn't let you stop [until the targets were met]. So by nine o'clock (we'd be in at eight o'clock), by nine o'clock all the full days' production'd be done, and then the fun would start, you'd all get out your sandwiches and your food and drink [...]. All the booze would come out, all the... you'd have, they'd send you out by 12 o'clock, you'd get really warm then! But you'd have a good old fun morning, you know. Give each other presents and things like that. It was really nice. Good days there.<sup>109</sup>

This practice was apparently so widespread that the entire factory must have been complicit, at least up to the level of the senior inspectors. Such shop-floor practices of 'making out', that is, of manipulating rates of production to suit worker priorities, feature in Donald Roy and Michael Buraway's studies of the Geer Company machine shop in 1945 and 1975 respectively.<sup>110</sup> These practices, in which everyone up to and including the foremen were complicit, served both the workers' need to meet production targets in order to maximize wages, and the stubborn or necessary compulsion to do so in ways which

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<sup>108</sup> Luscombe, Luscombe, and Luscombe, op cit.

<sup>109</sup> Docwra, op cit.

<sup>110</sup> Roy, cited in Michael Buraway. 'Thirty Years of Making Out'. In *On Work. Historical, Comparative and Theoretical Approaches.*, by R.E Pahl (ed.), 190-209. Oxford: Blackwell, 1988; and Burray, op cit.

Figure 4.5.



On the shop floor, line hands Kathy Docwra (centre with tinsel) and friends devised their own strategies of manipulating output targets in order to knock-off early at Christmas with the tacit collusion of management. This workplace culture of solidarity and sociability came under attack with the competitive pressures of a post-Fordist global economy. Photograph courtesy of Kathy Docwra, c. 1970.

'subverted rules promulgated from on high'.<sup>111</sup> Production which exceeded the organisation's maximum quota was kept aside as a 'kitty' to be drawn upon on days when it proved impossible to meet the quota – thus ensuring, as far as possible, the maximum achievable piecework wage in the long term. In Buraway's study, higher management disapproved of such manipulation since it produced a false picture of the actual maximum productive capacity of the factory, but foremen at the shop floor level would 'actively assist operators to make out by showing them tricks they had learned while they were operators' thereby colluding in the culture of the shop-floor.<sup>112</sup> A form of workplace experience that forced workers to weigh up their loyalties to fellows or management was an important element in the shaping of collective consciousness. With a cohort of workers that overlapped to a large degree with the local population of Ernesettle, it is inevitable that dynamics of the production line actively contributed towards the solidarity of the neighbourhood.

### **'I wouldn't've worked like I did' – weighing up time and money**

The dynamics of the factory production line forced individuals to weigh up personal and collective priorities on a number of levels: between the private enticement of wages and the social rewards of fellowship; between managerial authority and collective autonomy; and between bonuses and a more relaxed pace of work. A key trade-off, between time and money, was fundamental to each individual worker's relationship to their job, and in this there was a wide variation in personal circumstances and inclinations. Mrs Ashton worked at Bush from 1950, staying for 13 years before deciding to apply for a position at Renco 'because they had Friday afternoons off!' Her friends at Bush were sceptical: "Oh, they says", "you won't like it out there". "Oh yes I will – I'll make myself like it!"<sup>113</sup> For all Bush's sociability and convenience, the promise of an extra afternoon of leisure was too good to miss. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Gloria Oxland's mother worked herself into an early grave:

During the war she was with Western National Bus Company, as a bus conductress. And then she went back to that when I started school. And then after that she went down to the Bush factory. I think my mum

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p.209.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, p.200.

<sup>113</sup> Ashton and Ashton, op cit.

was in the canteen down the Bush. [...] She also took another job, she used to clean for a dentist at Stoke. [...] Yeah she used to work during the day and then go out like evenings and clean as well. But by the time she was [...] about 42 I suppose arthritis set in, she had rheumatoid arthritis. [...] She got really crippled in the end. She died at 60. [...] She had her knees replaced at 50, which was very young to be having that sort of thing done, it was when they first started doing it really. But it didn't do her any good because she was absolutely [crippled], head, every part of her body. So she always said then, "if I'd known what was going to happen to me I wouldn't've worked like I did", because you know. [At the time] she was quite happy to work, but then, they enjoyed giving me what they could, I suppose that was it. [...] But that was her one regret, that she'd worked so much and ended up like that you know.<sup>114</sup>

In choosing money over leisure, Mrs Oxland devoted herself to a life's work of 'giving Gloria what she could', a project which translated in the detail of our interview into an enthusiastic consumerism and an ambition that Gloria should become a home owner, ultimately moving away from Ernesettle to a private estate in Plympton (see chapter 5). Gary Cross, in his examination of the 'lost project of a leisure society', argues that the relative deprivation of the interwar and wartime years 'biased most families [post-war inclinations] toward money rather than time'.<sup>115</sup> Certainly this enthusiasm for consumption rather than leisure time is evident in some cases like Mrs Oxland, but in many ways individuals in Ernesettle *did* sacrifice money for time, whether that be the collective slack-time bought by a go-slow in the workplace, or the private leisure-time of a Friday afternoon off.

Being *movers* rather than *stayers*, the Oxlands were something of an exception in the oral history sample. In general, forms of collectivity fostered by the neighbourhood and home complemented a collective consciousness forged by the dynamics of worker experience on the production line or in the dockyard, fostering in locals the desire to stay – or alternatively, to go and come back. For as long as the economic fortunes of these workplaces were sustained by the combined forces of domestic demand and labour representation, that collective conscious persisted as a cohesive force, binding the society of Ernesettlers together through their overlapping work, leisure and consumer identities.

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<sup>114</sup> Browning, Toms (nee Oxland), and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>115</sup> Cross, 1993, op cit., p.129.

## Conclusion

The mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century has witnessed a transformation in worker subjectivity that has revolutionised the relationship of the worker to workplace, and to wider society. In the post-war period, powerful political and cultural discourses shaped an image of the ideal worker as a male breadwinner engaged in unskilled work whose unrewarding work days were repaid through parallel compensations of employment security and security of leisure. Post-war estates such as Ernesettle were constructed in a built form that sought to bring these ideas to life: schools and workplaces provided for training, then employment, homes, neighbourhood amenities, and green space provided for domestic and communal leisure. These built forms and the techniques they sheltered (such as school curricula and employment practices) were inflected by a dominant construction of the *ideal worker* that served to protect the male wage. In Ernesettle's early years this was experienced as an assumption that a working husband could and should support his dependent wife and children, thereby attaining a goal of working-class status and respectability, achieving the ideal.

However, of necessity, working-class families had always relied on the supplementary incomes of wives and children to sustain the household as a unit, making families ready to assimilate the new opportunities of work for women that the decentralization of industry brought to their neighbourhood. In addition, new resources of consumer identification were, as a result of full employment and increasing affluence, working their way down the income scale. The cultural ideal of domestic respectability increasingly included a desire to embrace consumerism. Working around these conflicting and sometimes complementary pressures, Ernesettle husbands and wives devised their own household strategies of work that included home-based earning, contributions from teenagers, and neighbourly support to facilitate women's waged work.

Whilst women made up an increasing proportion of the workforce (albeit in subordinate positions to men), men's working identities were also undergoing change. Full employment displaced the preeminent importance of job security, enabling a more mobile and transitory experience of work. The once vital importance of occupational identity and union affiliation to working men's identities began to wane, opening up a rift between the generations as older

men sought to instil outdated attitudes to work in their baby-boomer sons. Bolstered by the increased financial security conferred by dual household incomes, social welfare, and an abundance of employment opportunities, post-war men could afford to 'chase the money' if they wanted to. For some men, work became less settled and socially rooted, but this was not the case for their wives and families whose domestic responsibilities and local employment served as anchors to neighbourhood and neighbours. Within women's workplaces especially, practices of collective decision-making and solidarity reinforced the social identities and collective loyalties of the neighbourhood. The security conferred by the aggregate wealth of the household economy fuelled domestic consumption, but it also had a corollary in a security of leisure, experienced in the distinct and separate temporal space of the weekend or holiday. Aided by powerful local loyalties forged in the overlapping fields of work and neighbourhood, consumer goods were adopted into a collective culture that was expressed in the temporal space of high days and holidays and a shared mobility made possible by the consumer purchase *par excellence*: the family car.



## Chapter 5 – Ernesettlers

We had the fair nearly every year didn't we, without fail. Cause Alan Heron who was a coal man, he used to give us his lorry, he used to wash it down, really scrub it for our carnival once a year, and take us up. [...] And we had a lovely carnival atmosphere because people just chipped in and did whatever, which was quite nice. [...] I think it was just local people just generally getting together, and nothing was a hardship then either. They decided that they were going to do whatever and it just got done you know. Whereas now there's all this legality and health and safety and all the rest of it. I mean if you'd seen some of us standing on this flat bed coal lorry going around! But we did it and nobody had accident. We did it from the Mayflower on three occasions, we did it from the Church on two occasions, and I think we did it on one or two occasions from Biggin Hill School.<sup>1</sup>

This was the Ernesettle carnival of the 1970s: spontaneous and inclusive, it brought together all the neighbourhood groups, institutions, pubs, and clubs in one annual celebration of belonging. Once a year, residents, whether part of a choir, a majorettes troupe, the scouts, the pub tug-o-war team, the Air Training Corps (ATC), or simply as spectators, supporters, friends, or relations, 'just generally got together and got on with it'.<sup>2</sup> A self-initiated spectacle of citizenship that, by all accounts, reached a peak of mass-participation in the 1970s, the Ernesettle carnival symbolized and expressed the vitality of local participation built over the preceding decades.

This spectacle was surely what planners had in mind when they envisioned opportunities for 'mutual intercourse', in the 'socially efficient' neighbourhoods of the *Plymouth Plan*.<sup>3</sup> But the Ernesettle carnival also went beyond that imaginary vision of citizenship, creatively adopting and adapting the new cultural resources of television and popular culture into practices of local participation and collective entertainment. Such a development might perhaps have surprised the architects of reconstruction who saw, in the rise of popular entertainment, a drift towards passive spectatorship. Instead, it seems that Ernesettle residents actively appropriated televisual forms into community events, using the physical and social resources of the neighbourhood to stage local spectacles. These events evolved over the

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<sup>1</sup> Sterry, op cit.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Abercrombie and Paton Watson, op cit., pp.85 and 78.

post-war period from outposts of national celebration such as coronation tea parties, to festivities deeply connected to the local environment, local consciousness, and a local culture of necessity. Such a development in the 1970s was made possible by the crystallization of a community consciousness derived from multiple local sites of participation. From the Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG) to the model aircraft club, Ernesettle of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s offered numerous opportunities to belong.

This chapter looks at the development of a sense of belonging as it proceeded through the everyday social activities of the estate. Whilst previous chapters have investigated the detail of life at home and at work, here my focus is on the things that people self-consciously *did together* through clubs, associations, churches, pubs, and teams. The period from the 1950s to the 1970s is one of progressive change, which builds on the foundation of earlier years, and so whilst each decade has shades of a particular and identifiable social *character*, they also contain throw-backs to previous generations, as well as actions which seem to prefigure later developments. For the purposes of introduction it is necessary to crudely summarise this process, roughly translating the emphasis of oral material by decade, but as I hope to show in the text that follows, change progressed at different rates in different settings. I will argue that over a period of 30 years, local residents gradually moved beyond the cultural inheritance of the post-war plan, adopting and adapting the resources of the neighbourhood into a distinctive identity shaped by their shared geography and economic capacity. Social, economic, and cultural collectivity strengthened this bond of belonging in ways that were neither invented nor imagined by the planners of the post-war settlement, generating a sense of community that was rooted in Ernesettle.

For the new settlers of the 1950s, church provided a convenient shortcut to community cohesion, as well as the practical reinforcement of key values in the inventory of post-war collectivity. A revival in church attendance during the 1950s saw the church as the primary focus of social activities in Ernesettle. Sunday school attendance was almost universal and adult congregations also thrived, but the character of this social inclination could be best described, to use historian Heather Weibe's words, as 'belonging without

believing'.<sup>4</sup> In oral accounts, participation for its own sake consistently outshines faith as a rationale for church attendance. Within wider culture, religious ceremony was mobilized as a sign of national continuity – Anglican Christianity becoming a hallmark of 'cultural inheritance' and of 'commitment to community'.<sup>5</sup> At an everyday level, religious convention also lent support to the reinvigorated domesticity of the post-war era. Christianity, or more specifically, the conventions of Sunday, turned the emphasis of weekend leisure inwards towards the domestic and the neighbourhood, reinforcing the dominant cultural emphasis on family and locality as sites of citizenship.

Ernesettle in its early decades was the site of a thriving associational culture offering a variety of activities linked to the churches, the pubs, the youth club, and the social clubs. These activities offer a glimpse of coded discourses of citizenship perpetuated by their *host* organizations, but it is through the fine detail of lived experience that a subtle reorientation away from the institutionally sanctioned leisure of the post-war plan can be detected. Change was afoot, for example, when the youth club abandoned the physical discipline of fencing classes in favour of the casual sociability of the juke box; or the productive competition of the annual garden show was supplemented by the visual spectacle of a Miss Ernesettle competition. However, whilst the social life of the estate evolved in ways that marked the increasing influence of television and pop in the lives of residents, this occurred in parallel with an ever-strengthening connection to, and pride in, the neighbourhood. Through the 1960s and 70s, new resources for personal and group identification were embraced within associational activities that reinforced rather than diminished local identity. The intensity of local identification was most visibly expressed in the territorial aggression of 1960s teenage gangs whose inter-estate rivalry was rehearsed in skirmishes at local dances. These events also exposed the limits of local inclusivity: in the rare instances where outsider status was compounded by racial otherness, the relatively benign *show fight* could rapidly descend into genuine brutality.

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<sup>4</sup> Heather Weibe. 'Benjamin Britten, the "National Faith", and the Animation of History in 1950s England'. *Representation*, 93, no. 1 (2006): 76-105, p.80.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.80.

As baby-boomer teenagers reached adulthood, territorial masculinity was redirected into the more controlled competitive domain of sport. Tug-o-war and football teams offered an alternative form of weekend belonging than the church clubs of their members' childhoods. Based on physical strength and teamwork, and embedded in the local landscape, these self-initiated forms of local affiliation reinforced and reproduced commitment to the neighbourhood, whilst also being shaped in important ways by the shared economic capacity of their members. In common with the darts and euchre teams of the estate's pubs and social club, sports relied on reciprocal economies of exchange through networks and leagues across the city and region. Over time what emerged was a form of local citizenship re-imagined to suit the specific conditions of a post-war, working-class, provincial community.

This emergent citizenship of the 1960s and 1970s moved away from the official imaginings of 1940s middle-class planners, and re-shaped their legacy to suit the cultural preferences and economic capacity of the Ernesettle community. I will argue that the first generation children-of-Ernesettle achieved something of a social high-point during their adulthood between 1965 and 1985. A collective, local citizenship, shaped as it was by the powerful institutional discourses that permeated their post-war upbringing, was nevertheless remodelled on their own understanding of the cultural priorities of their class. Their achievement, which manifests in an era of social solidarity and cohesion that lasted for at least 20 years, should not be underestimated, and ranks alongside that of the grammar school children of the same generation whose parallel developmental path culminated in the social mobility and intellectual rewards of a university education.<sup>6</sup> The robust community created by Ernesettle's baby-boom generation and exemplified in the carnivals of the 1970s, is the working-class equivalent of this post-1945 legacy.

### **'Educating through leisure' – the state and leisure reform**

The Ernesettle Youth Association is an association formed for the purposes of helping and educating girls and boys through their leisure

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<sup>6</sup> The experience of social mobility of the grammar school generation is well documented in works like Liz Heron. *Truth, Dare or Promise. Girls Growing up in the Fifties*. London: Virago, 1985; and Roy Greenslade's *Goodbye to the Working Class*. London: Marion Boyars Publishers Ltd, 1976.

time activities so to develop their physical mental and spiritual capacities that they may grow to full maturity as individuals and members of society and that their conditions of life may be improved.<sup>7</sup>

The Ernesettle Youth Association, with its mission to 'develop physical, mental and spiritual capacities' in order to improve the lives of individuals and aid their maturity as 'members of society', captures a common understanding of the role of clubs and associations under social government. Comprising of 'a layer of organization located between the family and the state', the realm of associations (sometimes abbreviated by sociologists and historians within the term 'civil society') performed a mediatory function between personal and public, reconciling the interests of individuals with those of society as a whole.<sup>8</sup> With the 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion of the state into new areas of operation such as education and health, voluntary groups and associations increasingly formed part of the wider political apparatus. Recognition of their societal importance was reflected in the 1930s and 1940s through the inauguration of a host of central non-government organizations whose mission, historians Thompson and Tiratsoo summarise, as the 'project to reform popular leisure'.<sup>9</sup> This project sought to align the leisure habits of the nation with the goals of post-war citizenship. An array of National Councils was created, each charged with supporting citizenly behaviours in their respective arenas: the National Fitness Council (est. 1937), set out to 'inculcate a wider realization that physical fitness has a vital part to play in promoting a healthy mind and human happiness'; the National Council for Visual Education (est. 1942, renamed in 1945),<sup>10</sup> which worked towards 'a more beautiful and better planned environment for the everyday life of the people';<sup>11</sup> the Council for the Encouragement of Music and Arts (est. 1939), encapsulated its aim in the slogan 'the best for the most' – striving to disseminate high culture to the masses;<sup>12</sup> and the Council of Industrial Design (est. 1944) which set out to educate the public in 'good design'.

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<sup>7</sup> Source, trust deed relating to Ernesettle Youth Association, 1967. Budshead Barn Ernesettle, conveyances and related correspondence. Ref. PCC/45/1/2521.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Maier. 'Preface' in Frank Trentmann (ed.). *Paradoxes of Civil Society*. Oxford: Berghahn, 2003, p.xiii.

<sup>9</sup> Thompson and Tiratsoo, op cit., p.153.

<sup>10</sup> National Fitness Campaign, cited in Matless, op cit., p.91.

<sup>11</sup> National Council for Visual Education, cited in Matless, op cit., p. 260.

<sup>12</sup> Weight, op cit.

At grass roots level, clubs and associations benefitted financially from this expansion of state interest in leisure. The 1944 Education Act stipulated that local education authorities take the needs of adult education seriously, and groups already active in the field received welcome additional funding.<sup>13</sup> The practices promoted as a result of these subsidies reflected a desire to channel leisure in specific directions: promoting the physical fitness, group discipline, and constructive hobbies that might help to support social order. But Gary Cross cautions against an overly-paternalistic analysis of the project of leisure reform, it was, he argues a 'liberation' of public culture and recreation from the 'manipulative environments of the market and partisan politics' – 'an expansion of the right to time free from work and an opportunity for personal participation outside the compulsion of the market and hierarchy of productive enterprise'.<sup>14</sup> This attitude not only had consequences within the home (where space was provided for *constructive* hobbies, see chapter 3), but also in political support for associational activity of an apolitical and non-commercial variety in which *liberated leisure* might flourish.

Affiliations in civic society were also thought to reproduce democratic behaviour. Amongst the political establishment, clubs and associations were viewed as 'vehicles of participation' and 'as training grounds for formal political democracy' through which people could gain 'an understanding of the value of cooperative effort and a schooling in democratic technique'.<sup>15</sup> Such schooling sat alongside the political ambition for social order and moderation – imagining a smoothing out of factional antagonisms through the democratic structure of the small association, and countering the possibility of alienation of 'the small man in a society increasingly dominated by the hugeness of the state'.<sup>16</sup> It is a vision of active and participatory democracy captured in the over-arching narrative of Jill Cragie's film *The Way We Live* (see also chapter 3), in which democratic procedures of group decision-making mediated via meetings, discussion, voting, and public mobilization, are credited with the implementation of the *Plan for Plymouth*.

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<sup>13</sup> Thompson and Tiratsoo, op cit., p.153.

<sup>14</sup> Cross, 1993, op cit., p.8.

<sup>15</sup> Political and Economic Planning Review of a Programme, cited in Beach, 1998, op cit., p.102).

<sup>16</sup> Beach, 1998, op cit., p.108.

In this imagined democracy, civil society promised grass-roots self-government, equality amongst members, openness, and the improvement of society, but as Frank Trentmann has pointed out, the presence of an associational culture is not in itself an indication of democratic vitality. Clubs and associations are simultaneously inclusive and exclusive: expansionist and emancipatory in theory, they can be normative, prescriptive and hierarchical in practice.<sup>17</sup> 'The interplay between inclusion and exclusion, emancipation and discrimination' that Trentmann highlights, can be seen, for example, in the division of Ernesettle's associational activity along gendered lines via the Women's Co-operative Guild, or the Boy Scouts, each by their separate programmes contributing towards the construction of what constituted appropriate masculine or feminine domains.<sup>18</sup> Yet this interplay of inclusion and exclusion is complex in practice and cannot be over-simplified. In Ernesettle, a variety of affiliations bound individuals into local social life, offering forms of participation and belonging that could simultaneously sustain and critique norms and hierarchies: where, for example, the ostensibly conservative setting of church might provide a psychic refuge from the oppressive expectations of home; or where a masculine culture of amateur football could shelter reciprocal networks of local exchange in opposition to the cultural imperialism of commercial entertainment.

### **'Meeting community needs – citizenship and the Christian mission of service**

In Ernesettle's early years, churches provided the backbone of social activity in the neighbourhood. Whether through Sunday schools, women's groups, youth clubs, choirs, amateur dramatics, or coach trips, the churches acted as a community hub, offering a wide variety of social outlets to meet local needs. Whilst this diverse programme of activities supported varying levels of religious affiliation, it was remarkably consistent in the discursive and practical support it lent to dominant codes of citizenship. Religious practices connected to family, to community, and to moral education, reinforced the value of family domesticity, the collective obligations of the neighbourhood, and the socialization of children. Religious faith was a matter for personal

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<sup>17</sup> Frank Trentmann. *Paradoxes of Civil Society*. Edited by Frank Trentmann. New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 2003, p.3.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

negotiation, actively subscribed to by only a minority of the oral history sample. Everybody, however, spent time in church, sometimes at worship, but more often at Sunday school or one of the many clubs catering for a range of interests and age groups. Furthermore, Christianity structured the week in ways which amplified the importance of concurrent cultural discourses of family, gender, and domesticity. Thus, through the weekly meetings of the Methodist Sisterhood, the Sunday parades of the Boy's Brigade, the regular practice of the church choir, or the drama of the annual pantomime, Ernesettlers rehearsed and performed their commitment to the community, and children were socialized in the complementary values of Christianity *and* citizenship.

The post-war renaissance in church attendance on a Sunday is well documented, leading historian Callum Brown to describe the 1950s as 'the last decade in which one could talk of a Christian Britain'.<sup>19</sup> Sociologist Gracie Davie has argued that in this era of cultural conservatism 'the social synchronized with the secular'— Christianity signifying a sense of continuity with the national past. For Heather Weibe, the 1950s Christian revival is more of a last hurrah: 'an attempt to find some way of preserving a set of religious practices that had become an endangered part of the national past'.<sup>20</sup> Whatever the underlying cause, the period witnessed a productive alliance between the ambitions of the state to inculcate active citizenship and the everyday teachings and practices of Christianity. Historians have viewed this allegiance as both a reflection of 1950s conservatism, and as evidence of widespread consensus regarding collective social welfare. For Callum Brown, the post-war surge in church membership corresponds with 'a vigorous reassertion of "traditional" values: the role of women as wives and mothers, moral panic over deviancy and 'delinquency', and an economic and cultural austerity which applauded 'respectability', thrift, and restraint'.<sup>21</sup> For John Kent, the Christian revival is related to an historic congruence in the ambitions of Christian and political leaders, for once united in their advocacy of social reform, and reflected at the highest level of church leadership in the

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<sup>19</sup> Callum G. Brown. *The Death of Christian Britain*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Weibe, op cit., p.80.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.5.



support given to introduction of the Welfare State by the contemporary Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps the most obvious place in which citizenship and Christian values intersected was through the idea of the *mission of service* to the local community. As former resident Roger Beck, now himself a vicar in Plymouth, explained to me:

I think the church has various expressions of its mission. One is a mission of service to people and meeting community needs, another is evangelizing which is actually sharing the faith with people. Those two things are not necessarily mutually exclusive, you know. Sometimes people have some contact with you for one reason and end up developing something of another. So I think the church was actually trying to do both. But it was meeting needs [...] meeting the needs of youngsters with an open youth club, no requirement at attend church you could just come to the youth club, a meeting for ladies on a Tuesday afternoon, um a lot of older ladies coming together having a talk and you know something to eat and so on, that was meeting their needs.<sup>23</sup>

In its emphasis on communal obligations and duties, the Christian mission of service corresponded with a central element of post-war citizenship. Like the mobilized masses in *The Way We Live*, or the 'cooperative effort' imagined by Political and Economic Planning (PEP) (this chapter, page 238), at grass-roots level the church was a galvanizing force, bringing together local populations in acts of mutual support. Roger recalled that when, for example, women workers at Bush Radio found their lunchtime options limited to the pub or a picnic at the mercy of the elements, the Methodist Church improvised a canteen for their comfort and convenience. Established by a 'dynamic deaconess', Sister Nora Trinamen<sup>24</sup>, this relatively modest example of

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<sup>22</sup> John Kent. 'William Temple, the Church of England and British National Identity'. In *Right to Belong*, by Richard Weight and Abigail Beach (eds.):19-35. London: I.B.Tauris, 1998, p.25.

<sup>23</sup> Beck and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>24</sup> Sister Nora Trinamen was one of several Ernesettle clergy who achieved wider recognition on a regional or national scale. She also presented a children's television programme on local ITV channel Westward Television. St Aidan's Church also had its dynamic vicars: Rev. Harrison who started a local community magazine, called *Together*, in collaboration with the Methodist Church, and later developed this idea into the *People Next Door* campaign (1967-8), which had considerable success nationally, promoting the combined worship of different denominations. In the mid 1970s Reverend Roger Reeve was instrumental in setting up the local Action Group, a forum for the schools, Churches and community members that revived the local carnival.

community provision gave women workers a place to have lunch that offered shelter, economy, sorority, and sobriety:

The Methodist church sought to meet, one of the interesting needs. There were women working at the Bush and they just didn't have anywhere to sit and eat their sandwiches, and sort of have a bit of lunch, so the Methodist church opened up a kind of canteen which they ran for a number of years. They used to do a hot meal sort of once a week, but otherwise people could just come in and bring their sandwiches and it was somewhere for them to sit, use the facilities and so forth, that went on for a number of years.<sup>25</sup>

Whilst meeting the needs of the locality through its youth clubs or lunch clubs, the church also supported the reproduction of practices of citizenship, not only hosting an otherwise homeless group of women, but moreover demonstrating the social value of collective action. In many ways this congruence of values was more culturally salient than the church's evangelical ambitions. As oral memory of Sunday school in Ernesettle demonstrates, religious faith was only ever marginal as a motivating factor in church attendance.

### **'I was a Methodist by accident' – believing and belonging**

For children especially, church was a regular social destination. Sunday school in Ernesettle was extremely popular, and Sunday school gatherings were organized before either of the permanent church buildings were completed in 1953 and 1960, respectively. The first was a Pentecostal Sunday school, 'Sunshine Corner', established by the midwife, Nurse Babbington, at the Lakeside Infants School. All denominations were well attended: 'all the kiddies used to go up there' said Pat Luscombe of Sunshine Corner; 'it was packed, recalled Kathy Docwra of the Methodist Church; 'everybody went', said Gloria Oxland, of St Aidan's.<sup>26</sup> In these early days, a deeply held faith appears not to have informed either the decision to attend church, or the choice of which church to attend. A number of stories of denominational affiliation in Ernesettle lend support to Weibe's summation of the 1950s Christian revival as 'belonging without believing'.<sup>27</sup> Many residents choice of church was based on convenience: Alison Train attended the Methodist's Sunday School only until St Aidan's was built closer to her house,

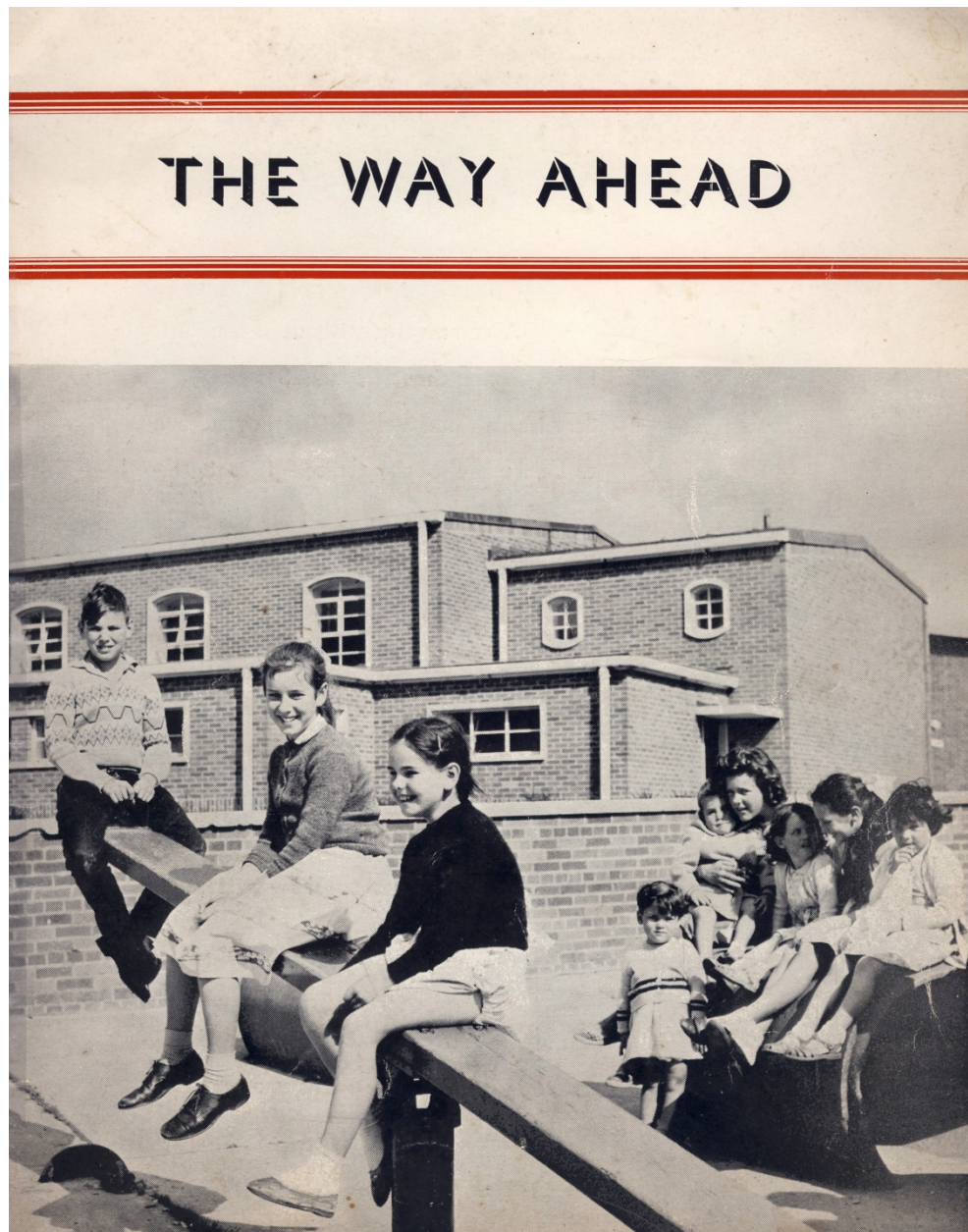
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<sup>25</sup> Beck and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>26</sup> Luscombe, Luscombe, and Luscombe, op cit.; Docwra, op cit.; and Browning, Toms (nee Oxland), and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>27</sup> Weibe, op cit., p.80.

Figure 5.1.



Ernesettle's churches were the primary focus of social activities in the 1950s, providing a convenient shortcut to community cohesion for the pioneer residents. Sunday School attendance was almost universal, a practice which lent support to the reinvigorated domesticity of the post-war era, turning the emphasis of weekend leisure inwards towards the home and the neighbourhood. St Aidans Church, pictured here on the cover of its *Way Ahead* fundraising pamphlet, called on families to pledge a regular donation to support the completion of building work, furnishings, and establishing youth activities, thereby binding locals into a shared process of putting down roots in Ernesettle.

whilst Roger Beck 'was a Methodist by accident' because it was 'the only option before any churches were built'.<sup>28</sup>

It is possible to detect a generational difference between children and adults in the treatment of faith as a motivation for attending church. For children and young people, going to Sunday school, and later to a church choir, or Boys Brigade, indicated no more serious an adoption of religious ideology than was implied by residents' choice of which denomination church to attend. As Gloria Oxland recalled:

I used to go St Aidan's. I mean I was never made to go to church, never [...] but I used to go because everybody else went. They had a youth club over there and we used to go to that, church choir for a while.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, for Marilyn Luscombe, going to church was a *pastime*, an enjoyable hour or two of singing with her friends.

I enjoyed it really. I mean I used to sing at the weddings, obviously there wasn't weddings on a Sunday. I just enjoyed it really, the whole thing. Obviously the singing I enjoyed as well, but um, yeah it was a pastime, but I did enjoy what I done".<sup>30</sup>

Not everyone enjoyed Sunday school. For Pat Sterry, Sunday school was not so much a social occasion as an obligation prompted by the religious conviction of her mother. Pat's story of church going and her mother's conversion to the Christian faith is revealing not only in confirming the universality of child church attendance, but importantly, in the way that it illuminates gender relations in the family.

My Mum's followed the church for years you know. She's not a bible puncher as such but she is a Christian. When we were little [...] Nurse Babbington used to have what she called Sunshine Corner. 'Cause you used to go in the hall [at] Lakeside School, and all the children used to go what they call Sunday school. And Mum got really taken with this. Dad didn't, Dad wasn't impressed at all, but from then on in Mum went to church. We had to go to Sunday school [...] every Sunday without fail. And then on a Friday night it became that there was Bible Studies and Crusaders.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Alison Train, op cit.; and Beck and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>29</sup> Browning, Toms (nee Oxland), and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>30</sup> Luscombe, Luscombe, and Luscombe, op cit.

<sup>31</sup> Sterry, op cit.

In contrast to the casual attitude of children, for some adults, particularly women in my oral history sample, church attendance was an important religious ritual and an affirmation of faith in God. Mrs Sterry's conversion, as recounted by Pat, was an explicit adoption of religious faith – 'she was really taken with it', and this is positively affirmed – 'she *is* a Christian'. But what is equally important is Pat's observation, remembered from when she was a small child, that this caused tension in the household – 'Dad wasn't impressed at all'. It is impossible to reconstruct the precise personal meaning of religion in Mrs. Sterry's life, but its significance is signalled by her will to defy her husband (elsewhere described by Pat as a domineering force – 'he's never lifted his finger to my mum, but I think she was afraid of him') in this matter.<sup>32</sup> The episode points towards a conflict between the demands on women as wives, and their desire for social and personal fulfilment outside of marriage and the home. Whilst many couples found ways of negotiating or accommodating these pressures, this was not always the case. For women in challenging marriages, the cultural pressure to achieve a happy domesticity in trying circumstances, must have meant that time in church offered a particularly precious outlet for private peace and fellowship, an alternative arena for personal and social enrichment that was a welcome psychological refuge. That this private space and time could be achieved without incurring public censure (as may have been the case had they sought divorce for example), suggests that although Christian religion was itself also implicated in the construction of female domesticity, in some circumstances, going to church represented an escape from the oppressive culture of home. Furthermore, as will be described later, church could also offer some women the chance to take on vital leadership roles within the community.

### **'There was nothing else to do!' – Sunday and the citizen**

Whilst generational differences in the understanding of church as *faith*, described above, indicate a loosening of the ties binding personal identity to religion. Christianity, nevertheless, remained an influential determinant of cultural practice throughout the 1950s, actively contributing towards the gender order of home. In particular, the organisation of social life produced by a Christian pattern of the week privileged the reproduction of the family as a

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

vital social unit, which in turn contributed towards a conservative gendering of roles within the home. The Christian legacy of the specialness of Sunday – even if no longer strictly observed as Sabbatarian ritual – conspired to turn the emphasis of Sunday activity inwards towards the domestic and local environment. This supported and reproduced the dominant cultural emphasis on family and locality as sites of citizenship.

Sending children to Sunday school, for instance, was a pragmatic choice for parents, providing convenient childcare, a few precious hours of child-free time, and an opportunity to prepare the Sunday roast. This meal was a privileged occasion of family togetherness, what Callum Brown has described as 'a weekly affirmation of family life, its relative luxury over the diet of the rest of the week subscribing each family member to complex religious, family and community values'.<sup>33</sup> This weekly practice, in turn, reinforced a commitment to family as a privileged social group (to be given time and treated to *luxury* food), and to the gendered division of roles within the family. The precise nature of the Sunday timetable and the tasks that constituted it, varied between families, but it was common for mother and female children to devote extra time on this day to cooking for the family. As Kathy Docwra explained, Sunday was 'baking day'.

Every Sunday morning was what she called baking day, which was the fruit cake and the buns and the treacle tart, treacle and coconut tart. She used to bake on a Sunday all day, and us girls would be helping then. Everything was boxed and tinned up. Obviously to feed five kids through the week. So we always ate well I can remember that. We always had nice meals. I can remember having nice hot meals, and we'd always have cake buns, that type of thing. Always had a big roast dinner on a Sunday.<sup>34</sup>

Sunday domesticity, however, was not exclusively female. As chapter 3 showed, home-making was a shared, albeit gendered, effort, with Sunday a particular focus of family mobilization at the home. In some homes, an emphasis on family activity was actively enforced. Roger Beck recalled 'not being allowed out to play on a Sunday', a ban, which in later years, also extended to watching television. Such household rules ensured attention was focused on faith and family, indicating also a suspicion that these might be diluted by the invasion of external entertainment. Even in less strict

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<sup>33</sup> Brown, *op cit.*, p.134.

<sup>34</sup> Docwra, *op cit.*

households, Sunday entertainments were limited. As Roger summarised, 'Sunday was Sunday of course, nothing happened did it?'<sup>35</sup> Sunday's specialness was shaped culturally and institutionally by the lack of wider alternatives: shops were closed, professional sports were not played, and public transport ran to a more limited timetable. Even though (one presumes) not every shop-keeper or sports player subscribed to Christian faith, the legal sanctification of Sunday and *closure* of commercial culture conspired to turn the emphasis of Sunday activity inwards towards the immediate domestic and local environment. Religious institutions such as Sunday schools were the obvious beneficiaries, but Sunday also reaffirmed connections to family and home, neighbourhood and community. These overlapping loyalties were brought together in the Sunday walk. As Marilyn Luscombe remembered: 'Dad used to take us for our walk down Saltash Passage, Sunday afternoon, most Sundays'.<sup>36</sup> In other families the 'walk' might be another form of outing, a car trip to Dartmoor, an afternoon spent swimming in the creek, or pottering about on a boat. Importantly then, Sunday trading and cultural practices rooted in Christian respect for the Sabbath, also affirmed the value of family and locality. The sanctity of Sunday provided the temporal space in which to reinforce the local culture of the neighbourhood through shared social practices. Whilst this produced a social life that was family-centric and gendered, at the same time, church could be a site of liberation from the oppressive aspects of home life, providing a psychic refuge or, alternatively, a public stage for a female action.

### **'I'll soon get you singing' – choirs, music and performance**

Counter-acting the conservative bias towards family that Sunday lent to social life, through the church, women could also find their place in the community as organizers and activists. This, in the hands of a lively or creative individual, provided a context for making an important contribution to local life, and seems to have been especially facilitated at the Methodist and Pentecostal churches where women such as Nurse Babington, Sister Trinanmen, and Mrs Beck were well-remembered characters. For those who chose to take advantage, church hosted many social opportunities that gave women a public life outside the home. As Roger Beck recalled of his mother:

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<sup>35</sup> Beck and Fraser, *op cit.*

<sup>36</sup> Luscombe, Luscombe, and Luscombe, *op cit.*

'something was going on, mother was in the Church most days' – Tuesday afternoons were the ladies Sisterhood, Wednesday the ladies choir and drama group, and Thursdays the girls' choir.<sup>37</sup> Mrs Beck's choir (the Croydon Singers, named after Croydon Gardens where the Beck's lived) combined training, fellowship, discipline, and enjoyment, staging regular 'concert party' performances at residential homes and talent contests throughout Plymouth. She also produced an annual pantomime, which my co-interviewer Rob Fraser remembers 'was a real highlight – there was a clamour for tickets!' <sup>38</sup> Ladies choir member Beta Murphy remembered her experience of joining.

And then [Mrs Beck] spoke to the congregation, she would like to get some singers. And I thought, "well I'm not a singer, but I could fill a gap". So I said to her, I said, "look, I got no voice, I got no singing, but I'll willingly join". "Yes!" she said "I'll soon get you singing." And she did [...] Oh we used to put on some fine concert parties down there. I would say twice a year.[...] She was a good teacher and a thorough one. Oh if you sung one note out, she knew right away, you couldn't shield behind somebody else, she knew right away. She had two choirs, children's choir and the ladies choir, the ladies choir was six of us.[...] She was excellent, thorough, you know.<sup>39</sup>

Although it was gender specific, the choir was in other ways an inclusive association – lack of experience was no bar to joining, and reaching out to new members was encouraged. As Beta Murphy explained, 'Mrs Beck made you friendly, we was trying to get a bigger choir and you approached all your friends and what not'.<sup>40</sup> Having an excuse 'to be friendly' may have been a helpful ice-breaker to overcome the respectful distance of neighbourly relations (see chapter 3): the church buildings providing a neutral territory in which to forge friendships without encroaching on the private space of the home. For new arrivals in Ernesettle, this could also have provided an opportunity to start afresh or branch out socially. Whilst the story of new estates that has captured the public imagination has been one of isolation and loneliness, Mark Clapson has argued that, in some locations, post-war population movements actually enabled new sociabilities.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Beck and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Murphy, op cit.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Young and Wilmot, op cit.



Figure 5.2.



In Ernesettle's early years, churches provided the backbone of social activity in the neighbourhood, but this was not necessarily an indication of religious faith. Whether through the weekly meetings of the Methodist Sisterhood, the Sunday parades of the Boy's Brigade, or the drama of the annual pantomime, Ernesettlers rehearsed and performed their commitment to *community*, and children were socialized in the complementary values of Christianity and citizenship. 'There was a clamour for tickets!' to Mrs Beck's Christmas Panto at the Methodist Church. Photograph courtesy of Roger Beck.

In his comparative study of estates and new towns, Clapson found that clubs were reported to have widened peoples' social horizons. One woman in Stevenage stated that 'getting involved in the women's clubs gave me confidence and made me really branch out in so many things. I am sure I would not have done half the things that I have been able to do here if I had stayed in London all these years'.<sup>42</sup>

In Ernesettle it is evident that Mrs Beck's choir developed skills and self-esteem amongst members like Beta Murphy and Marilyn Luscombe, whilst membership also conferred a share a collective identity that was firmly embedded in the neighbourhood (as signified by the name – Croydon Singers). Performance-based associational activity was also useful to the creation of a wider sense of community, drawing both active members and passive audience into the orbit of its shared experience. Furthermore, the choir performed an ambassadorial role within the locality, connecting to a city-wide community of amateur entertainment through the network of care homes and clubs at which they performed. Thus, Mrs Beck's Croydon Singers served as a vehicle for participation and belonging within the neighbourhood *and* the city of Plymouth, extending the geographic mobility of its female membership beyond the (potential isolation) of the home and estate. As clippings carefully preserved in Marilyn Luscombe's teenage scrapbook record, the choir's concerts were recognised in the local press, an endorsement for members of the social value of their efforts.

In addition, Ernesettle's micro-culture of music and performance that was organised by Mrs Beck was supported by home craft skills that extended through members and non-members' homes in the neighbourhood. Marilyn Luscombe, a Croydon Singer throughout her teens, remembered

we had beautiful dresses. Every year we had a new dress, like each Christmas to do each show.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> H. and C. Rees, cited in Clapson, op cit. p. 109.

<sup>43</sup> Luscombe, Luscombe, and Luscombe, op cit.

Figure 5.3.



Membership of the Croydon Singers conferred a share in a collective identity that was firmly embedded in the neighbourhood – named after Croydon Gardens, the street on which choir mistress Mrs Beck lived. The choir performed an ambassadorial role within the locality, connecting to a city-wide community of amateur entertainment through the network of care homes and clubs at which they performed as part of Mrs Beck's 'St Judes Variety Party' line-up. Marilyn Luscombe's scrapbook, 1971, courtesy of Marilyn Luscombe.

Made by a mother of one of the singers, the choir's matching dresses were paid for by weekly subscription. This interaction between different crafts and skills was replicated elsewhere, for example, as a result of enrolling her children in the dance classes at St Aidan's, Bernice Smale,

went into town and bought a sewing machine for five pound, bought it home on the bus [...] to make the tutus and all the other things. The girls was thrilled to bits'.

Craft practices combined neighbourliness and thrift, with the mediation of contemporary fashion through local hand skills.<sup>44</sup> As Fiona Hackney has argued, home craft harnessed a 'sense of agency and self-determination' that 'enabled and underscored women's skills, taste and decision-making power within the home'.<sup>45</sup> These related skills could prove, in themselves, to be the basis of pride and self-esteem, as well as offering flexible forms of paid work that could be structured around the demands of childcare and the home (see also chapter 4). Here, home craft served a broader purpose than the clothing of family or creation of a homely home. Craft skills that had been valorised by the feminine domesticity of the 1950s were adopted into the production of a neighbourhood and city-wide culture of amateur entertainment.

### **'With a Little Bit of Luck' – talent contests and class**

The local concert party scene was also plugged-in to a wider geography of cultural production via participation in national talent contests. On the talent contest stage class was self-consciously articulated – by the hosts, if not the entrants. These contests, hosted by entertainers who had risen to star status from working-class origins, celebrated a new form of social mobility that translated the working class medium of music hall variety performance on to the national stage of radio and television. As such, they reinforced for performers the wider cultural value of their endeavour – not simply isolated local entertainment, but a skill endorsed by high profile show business stars that were household names. Marilyn Luscombe's scrapbook of cuttings included, for example, the local heats of a national competition at

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<sup>44</sup> Smale, op cit.

<sup>45</sup> Fiona Hackney. "'Use Your Hands for Happiness": Home Craft and Make-do-and-Mend in British Women's Magazines in the 1920s and 1930s'. *Journal of Design History*, 19, no. 1 (2006): 23-38, p.23.

Figure 5.4.



Craft skills, once central to the feminine domesticity of the 1950s, were adopted into the production of a neighbourhood and city-wide culture of amateur entertainment. Matching dresses – ‘a new one every year’ – were made by the mother of one of the Croydon Singers, and paid for on weekly subscription. The Croydon Singers at Derrys Department Store, Plymouth (above), and at a wedding at Ennesettle Methodist Church (below), c. 1970. Photographs courtesy of Marilyn Luscombe.

Plymouth Hoe Theatre hosted by wartime entertainer Tommy Trinder. Marilyn's mother, Pat, could still recall Trinder's 1950s catchphrase, 'Trinder's the name!', at our interview in 2011.<sup>46</sup> This catchphrase, which in another variation ran thus: 'the name's Trinder. That's T-R-I-N-D-E-R, pronounced Chumley', was a 'dig at the snobs of society, who insisted on pronouncing ordinary names in a fancy way which was utterly un-phonetic'.<sup>47</sup> This was a satire directed at the cultural and economic privileges encoded in the linguistic shibboleths of the English upper class. Trinder, as the first compère of ITV's *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* (1955-58), drew attention to this tension between working-class talent, and the privileged class of 'Featherstonshaughs and Cholmondeleys' who still dominated as arbiters of taste. Yet his prime-time slot asserted the increasing cultural prominence of popular (working-class) entertainment in the television age.

The talent contest, with its music hall origins and promise of a social trajectory from unknown to star status, was an entertainment medium with a particularly working-class appeal. It also operated through a regional and national geography, paving a path for aspiring performers from the regions to make their way to the nation's entertainment capital. Roger Beck was one such hopeful, competing for the *Frankie Vaughan Trophy*, which he won in 1960.<sup>48</sup>

Frankie Vaughan was a big star in his day, and his big charity work was as a great patron of boys clubs. And every year [...] they had a national competition for these Frankie Vaughan trophies. And there were heats in Plymouth, if you got through that you went to Bristol for the regional heats. If you go through the regional heats you went to the show. So I got through obviously and got into the show at the Royal Festival Hall. And there were two trophies: one for a single act and one for groups. And I won the single act when I was 12. Yeah I think it [the song] was *With a Little Bit of Luck* from *My Fair Lady*. [...]

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<sup>46</sup> Marilyn Luscombe. Private photographs and scrapbook; and Patricia Luscombe. Interview by Hilary Kolinsky, 2011.

<sup>47</sup> Gregory K. Vincent. *A history of Du Cane Court : land, architecture, people and politics*. Woodbine, 2008.

<sup>48</sup> Popular singer Frankie Vaughan's patronage of talent contests was inspired by a commitment to the democratic potential of musical performance. A child of Jewish immigrants in Liverpool, as a youth, Vaughan had received boxing training through the Lancaster Boys Club, before obtaining a scholarship to Lancaster Art School where he learned the musical skills from which he developed his career. Over his lifetime, Vaughan's charitable work sought to replicate this social trajectory for other youngsters.

Figure 5.5.



The local *concert party* scene was plugged-in to a wider geography of cultural production via participation in national talent contests. These celebrated a new form of social mobility that translated the working class medium of music hall variety performance on to the national *stage* of radio and television. Roger Beck (accompanied by Fred Train, left) winning the Frankie Vaughan Trophy in 1960, aged 12. Photograph and newspaper cutting courtesy of Roger Beck.

After that I had a go, to see if I could make a career, but it didn't [work out]. I did some auditions, for a musical and BBC shows and TV. I had an agent for a while. We had to keep going up and down [to London], and the agent said "look, if you're serious you really need to get up here", and that wasn't an option so my career in that ended at the age of about 13!<sup>49</sup>

Whilst talent contests reinforced the value of amateur entertainment at a local level, they also offered a progression route to regional and national heats culminating in the finals at the Royal Festival Hall. This venue, a joyful celebration of British modernity at the time of its construction for the Festival of Britain in 1951, embodied 'a vision of a classless, united society' underscoring the notion of meritocratic achievement that the talent show advanced.<sup>50</sup> For Roger, commuting distance from Plymouth to London ultimately thwarted hopes of child stardom, but the experience may have opened his eyes to opportunities beyond the estate, and after leaving school he did in fact return to London to train for the clergy.

### **'I made a full-sized boat' – youth clubs and constructive leisure**

Roger Beck's close encounter with stardom came at the instigation of the then youth club leader, Fred Train, a well-known character on the estate thanks to his day job as Rent Man and Welfare Officer. Fred's youth club, a key site of collective memory across the oral history cohort, fostered the talents of many local youngsters. Established in the late 1940s, the club initially operated from a nissen hut at the Transit School site and subsequently moved to the former Budshead Farm, first to the farmhouse, and later, to a space in the refurbished barn alongside the branch library. Amongst its programme of activities, the club hosted 'Saturday Morning Pictures' for younger children, comprising of a factual natural history film followed by a cartoon feature; it had football and cricket teams competing in local leagues; boxing, snooker, table tennis, model aircraft making, and (in the 1950s) fencing classes for boys and girls. These activities, with their emphasis on physical health, education, and constructive leisure, reflected the ambition for popular leisure reform then circulating in political and planning discourses. The 1944 Education Act had made youth provision 'a fully integrated component of Britain's education system' administered by Local Education Boards, and this institutional alliance

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<sup>49</sup> Beck and Fraser, op cit.

<sup>50</sup> Conekin, op cit., p.13.



Figure 5.6.



The project to 'reform popular leisure' sought to align the leisure habits of the nation with the goals of post-war citizenship through government funded organizations such as youth clubs and adult education centres. In Ernesettle, fencing was one unlikely pastime available to working-class youth at the Budshead Barn club, schooling youngsters in deportment and discipline. Equally, however, the influence of resident rent man and youth leader, Fred Train, allowed grass-roots interests such as boat-building and model-making to flourish under the leadership of local lad Charlie Sells (pictured left working on his full size boat). Photographs courtesy of PWDRO, refs. PCC/76/5/3232/1, PCC/76/5/3233/1, and PCC/76/5/3234/1.

sought to ensure that in their leisure time young people were socialized into the parallel disciplines of the workplace and the home: trained in practices of fitness, cooperation, and craft.<sup>51</sup>

As the mission statement for the Ernesettle Youth Association stated, a key aim for the youth club was to develop in 'girls and boys[,] through their leisure time activities', the 'physical mental and spiritual capacities' that would make them 'members of society'.<sup>52</sup> This meant preparing young people for their social obligations at work, at home, and in the community. In Ernesettle, sporting activities such as football improved physical fitness and fostered teamwork, whilst fencing and boxing produced a different kind of physical and mental discipline. Photographs from the 1950s of the youth club's fencing sessions recall the publications of the 1939 National Fitness Campaign, whose promotion of 'a mass physical culture reflected ongoing military concerns over the fitness of recruits, as well as a wider ethos of fitness as a positive social force'.<sup>53</sup> Ernesettle teens are depicted in a united advance, a model of group order and discipline, their matching jackets and choreographed posture mirroring, in bodily comportment, the orderly quality that was also sought in architectural form (see chapter 2).<sup>54</sup>

As children and young people, girls' and boys' leisure opportunities were designed to tutor them in their expectations for later life. Women in the oral history cohort remembered participating in choirs and sewing groups, whilst boys clubs, such as the Scouts and the ATC, 'wove together imperialism, the concern for national efficiency and the growing enthusiasm for the cleansing effects and moral regeneration of contact with "the outdoors"'.<sup>55</sup> The military formula of drills, uniforms and marching produced both discipline of the individual comportment and a choreographed discipline within the social group.

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<sup>51</sup> Bill Osgerby. *Youth in Britain since 1954*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, p.140.

<sup>52</sup> Trust deed relating to Ernesettle Youth Association (Budshead Barn Ernesettle, op.cit.

<sup>53</sup> Matless, op cit., p.91.

<sup>54</sup> Chapter 2 shows photographs of junior fencing at Ernesettle Youth Club, 1953.

<sup>55</sup> Morris, R. J. *Clubs, societies and associations*. Vol. 3, in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750 - 1950*, by F. M. L. Thompson (ed.), 395-444. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.424.

Figure 5.7.



The Ernesettle Seafire, emblematic of the overlapping discourses of patriotism, wartime memory, and collective discipline that inflected local life with nationally meaningful conceptions of citizenship. This wartime relic connected Ernesettle's children to the patriotic narratives of RAF history that were also conjured by the estate's street names. Photograph courtesy of Edgar Frost.



As a forces city, Plymouth had a vested interest in the reproduction of military labour. Boys clubs such as the Scouts and the ATC wove together discipline, 'imperialism, national efficiency, and exposure to the morally invigorating effects of the outdoors'.<sup>56</sup> Ernesettle ATC 334 Squadron at 'Transit', Biggin Hill, Ernesettle, source Mike Taylor.

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<sup>56</sup> Morris, op cit., p.424.

In some cases, as Malcolm Ward remembers of his ATC duties, the experience was as much about learning to discipline others, as it was about adhering to rules oneself:

There was a Spitfire between two of the huts, and [...] we had to do guard duty every now and then to guard the plane cause kids [...] used to come up and want to climb all over it and wreck it.<sup>57</sup>

This aircraft, in fact a Seafire (the naval version of a Spitfire adapted for operation from aircraft carriers at sea), is emblematic of the overlapping discourses of patriotism, wartime memory, and collective discipline that inflected local life with national conceptions of citizenship. A redundant wartime relic, the plane took on a new life in Ernesettle that connected the estate's children to the patriotic narratives of Royal Air Force (RAF) history then being busily memorialized by Britain's film industry. From *Angels One Five* in 1952, to *The Dam Busters* in 1955, *Reach for the Sky* in 1956, and *Battle of Britain* in 1969, two decades of filmic narrative highlighting the heroic airmen of the RAF formed a cornerstone of the mythic construction of the British wartime story. The symbolic repurposing of the Seafire gave Ernesettle's post-war generation an opportunity to share in the collective consciousness of their parents and to practice, through citizenship, the collective spirit of wartime – whether through the discipline of their peers in enforcing the aircraft's protection; or by association in joining the ATC to follow in the footsteps of their heroes.

As a *forces city*, Plymouth had an interest in the reproduction of military labour. Its forces affiliated youth groups were (and still are) active locally. Youth clubs also had a part to play in the labour supply for a local economy that was dominated by the construction and servicing of ships. Down at the Barn, model-making classes helped to bridge this space between leisure and work, introducing youngsters to manual skills that were in high demand at the local dockyard. The classes were led by Charlie Sells, himself a dockyard apprentice, local lad, and keen model-maker:

Fred Train come to see me, because obviously I'd been seen flying my [model] aircraft down here. I think he got in touch with me and asked me if I would come down to the club and take a class down there, and we had a class twice a week, I think it was about seven 'til nine. I had about a half a dozen young lads. [...] We used to make more or less

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<sup>57</sup> Ward and Ward, op cit.

plastic kits and little chuck gliders made out of balsa wood, nothing complicated you know.[...] We used to fly 'em down there on the grass, by the football pitches. [...] Well I met my wife [who] was one of the senior girls down there, I was ten years older than her, virtually. Of course I met her down there and she joined my model aircraft club. She made three model aircraft I think. I made a full-sized boat down there as well. In the front room, we had a helluva job getting [it] out the front door actually!<sup>58</sup>

Then aged 18, Charlie was two years into an apprenticeship as a pattern maker in the dockyard when first approached by Fred Train to lead a class. As a skilled apprentice, Charlie would have provided a solid role model for the young boys at the youth club who could be introduced to manual and drawing skills through model-making in their leisure time. In this sense, model-making as a youth activity performed a socializing function that supported existing structures of working-class division of labour: reproducing gendered expectations of men's work, and helping to supply the local labour market.

Female role models were cast in a different mould. As any reader of Ladybird books, Enid Blyton stories, or Jackie comics will remember, literature for children and young women of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s relentlessly reinforced an image of feminine domesticity, physical inferiority, and emotional sensitivity. However, even in ostensibly conservative settings, such as the *lad's* model aircraft club, the cultural terrain was shifting: whilst Charlie Sells described his club as consisting of 'half a dozen young lads', it was also where he met his wife, who, herself 'made three model aircraft'. By the late 1950s, when Charles met Margaret over an Airfix kit, the apparently rigid gendering of pastimes and occupations were beginning to become more flexible, or at least, individual women, such as Margaret, felt sufficiently confident to subvert the dominant expectations of gendered behaviour. As a couple also, Charles and Margaret signalled an evolution away from the male/work, female/home binarism of the 1950s towards more balanced understandings of personal and marital identities that combined both work and home for both genders.

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<sup>58</sup> Sells, op cit.

Figure 5.8.



As an apprentice pattern maker in the dockyard, Charlie Sells provided a solid role model for young boys at the youth club, introducing them to manual and drawing skills through model-making in their leisure time. The model-making group was open to Ernesettle's young women too, and it was here that Charlie met his wife Margaret, a kindred spirit and paragon of both domestic and occupational competence. Photograph of members of the model aircraft group outside the youth club in Ernesettle (Charlie, back row, third from left), c. 1950, courtesy of Charlie Sells.

Throughout the interview with Charles, his deep respect for Margaret's skills and aptitude both at home ('she could turn her hand at anything') and as a working woman ('she was involved in the production of prototype electronics, a very good wire woman she was') shone through repeatedly. As chapter 4 demonstrated, local manufacturing employment in Ernesettle diluted the occupational dominance of housewifery – working women, and many hundreds of them, were a visible presence in the estate's everyday life.

### **'A very interesting talk' – co-operation and The Women's Co-operative Guild**

The ambiguous and shifting relationship between women, home, and the public sphere was also evident in adult associations. The Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG), for example, provided the basis of both local sorority, and a connection to wider networks of politics and commerce. The WCG, an offshoot of the Co-operative Society 'with deep roots in working class communities',<sup>59</sup> was active in Plymouth from 1886, its aim and object to 'unlock a fuller and wider life for members based on equality and humanity'.<sup>60</sup> At the peak of its membership in 1938, the WCG had 88,000 members nationally across 1,800 branches.<sup>61</sup> The popularity of the WCG reflected a wider trend of feminine citizenship via mainstream organizational affiliation that saw a parallel rise in membership for groups across the social spectrum including the Women's Institute (WI) and the Women's Unionist Association.<sup>62</sup> After the passing of the 1928 Equal Franchise Act, women's organizations provided a forum for the representation of newly enfranchised women's views and were active in making demands for social welfare reforms, such as the provision of family allowances, free health care, better housing, and improved maternity services.<sup>63</sup> During the war years, for example, Plymouth's guild leaders had petitioned for female representation on the city's Housing and Reconstruction Committees, arguing that the provision of 'decent homes with

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<sup>59</sup> Scott, op cit., p.165.

<sup>60</sup> Editorial, 'Celebrating 56 years of the Women's' Co-operative Guild' in *The Western Independent*. 02/08/1942.

<sup>61</sup> Scott, op cit., p.165.

<sup>62</sup> Beaumont quotes membership increases between 1930 and 1950 of 262,000 for the National Federation of Women's Institutes, and 2.6 million for the Women's Unionist Association. Beaumont, Catriona. 'The Women's Movement, Politics and Citizenship, 1918-1950s'. In *Women in Twentieth Century Britain*, by Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 262-277. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Ltd, 2001, p.266.

<sup>63</sup> Beaumont, op cit., 267.

labour-saving devices would give women time for outside interests' and asking '[w]hy should men dictate the kind of homes women should have?'.<sup>64</sup> And in the changed conditions of wartime, government policy-makers engaged with women's experience in ways their predecessors had not, with WCG representations on behalf of working-class women informing the housing recommendations of the Dudley Report (see chapter 3).<sup>65</sup>

With their demands for housing reform substantially met, the focus of women's organizations in the post-war period leant towards the social and the domestic. Maggie Andrews writes, for example, of a 'gradual waning of the WI's more overt political activities in the post-war period', a settlement into what Lorna Gibson has called a form of 'moderate' feminist action, directed towards improvements in women's experience of everyday life as housewives and consumers.<sup>66</sup> An emphasis on informed consumerism catered for the revived domesticity of the 1950s, with the WI magazine *Home and Country* frequently publishing guides on the best fridges, television sets, and washing machines. Within the Fordist cycle of production-taxation-consumption, consumerism was a legitimate aspect of citizenship, and formed, according to Andrews, 'a space from which women could define themselves as part of the nation with a right to belong as discerning consumer citizens'.<sup>67</sup> The co-operative movement had a particularly strong historic association with the shaping of discerning consumers, emerging in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a means of defence by consumers against 'increasingly powerful interests amongst distributors and producers to create and discipline mass markets'.<sup>68</sup> As a form of collective representation, co-operation tackled inequities in production *and* consumption, empowering workers and consumers alike.

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<sup>64</sup> Editorial, 'Women's Co-operative Guild Rally' in *The Western Independent*. 08/03/1942.

<sup>65</sup> Scott, op cit.; and Roberts, op cit.

<sup>66</sup> Maggie Andrews. "'For home and country": feminism and Englishness in the Women's Institute movement, 1930-60'. In *Right to Belong* by Weight & Beach. London: I.B.Tauris, 1998, p.126; and Lorna Gibson. 'Conducting Empowerment: Music-Making in the Women's Institute during the Inter-War Years'. In *Women in Europe between the Wars. Politics, Culture and Society*, by Angela Kershaw and Angela Kimyongur. Aldershot, Hants.: Ashgate, 2007.

<sup>67</sup> Andrews, op cit., p.131.

<sup>68</sup> Martin Purvis. 'Co-operation, Consumption and Politics in Britain and Continental Europe c. 1850-1920'. In *The Consumption Reader*, David B. Clarke, Marcus A. Doel and Kate M.L. Housiaux (eds.): 69-76. London: Routledge, 2003, p.69.



In Plymouth, the Co-operative was highly visible: its flagship department store the first building to commence in the reconstructed city centre, and its smaller grocers dominating the shopping parades on the post-war estates. Co-op membership provided a form of collective representation and benefit which catered to varying degrees of interest in its *active* associational activities. For those of a more social disposition, the WCG offered a regular programme of parties, talks, coach trips, bingo, raffles, and fundraising activities.<sup>69</sup> For the rest, the act of shopping itself was a form of quiet participation in collective purchasing power and many of the oral history cohort can, to this day, remember their Co-op membership number (Malcolm Ward, 62974; Sheila Browning, 17687; and Marilyn Luscombe, 71927). These five-digit codes were quoted daily at the Co-op tills to receive the 'divi' stamp for their share of members' profits.

Hand-written minute books for the Ernesettle branch of the WCG indicate a well-established group in the years 1961-67. Approximately 30 members met every two weeks at St Aidan's Church Hall to have tea, play bingo, and listen to a variety of talks. The WCG combined values of sociability and neighbourliness (gifts and cards were sent to sick members), with practical training (flower making, care of the home), consumer awareness (though promotion of co-operative shops and stores), and education in co-operative values (talks on co-operation around the world). Members were regularly encouraged to attend training courses and the annual conference ('delegates can bring children'), and the group provided a direct link between Ernesettle women and the local authority via the organisation's National President and local Councillor, Mrs Iris Flett, who regularly spoke at Ernesettle meetings, taking members' concerns before the WCG Council. The minutes of these meetings are a triumph of polite understatement in which domestic education sits alongside the expansion of a global political consciousness.

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<sup>69</sup> Co-operative Society, Plymouth Women's Co-operative Guild, Ernesettle Guild minute books and account books 1961-1968. Ref. 3071/Box 4.

For example:

- August 18<sup>th</sup> 1966      The speaker gave a very interesting talk on the Atomic bomb.
- September 8<sup>th</sup> 1966      Mrs Fisher gave a demonstration about making flowers. The members were very interested and admired the flowers.<sup>70</sup>

Such muted local records belie the position that WCG members maintained at the vanguard of political action, but they also reflect the overlap between the feminine domestic realm and matters of global concern. Nationally, the WCG was an early agitator in the campaign against nuclear weapons. Their campaigning efforts of the 1950s emphasizing the dangers to mothers and children, and key members later forming the National Council for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapon Tests, was an early progenitor of the CND.<sup>71</sup> Whereas pre-war WCG effort had been preoccupied with the representation of members domestic concerns, the Ernesettle WCG minutes reflect an expansion of the organisation's political attention to include international developments. Talks on co-operation by senior guilds women were evidently left-leaning and spoke to a working-class interest not only in socialist politics, but also in workplaces themselves.

- 28<sup>th</sup> July 1966      Mrs Sewell arrived and gave a very interesting talk on her visit as a delegate to East Germany. She spoke of the rebuilding and Co-operation in different towns, also the different factorys. A vote of thanks was given by Mrs Miller, seconded by Mrs McGuire.
- 26<sup>th</sup> June 1967      Mrs Flett our National President gave a very interesting talk on her visit to Russia. She spoke of the wonderful welcome the delegates had and of the many interesting places that were visited. Some very nice photos were passed around of the building[s] and the people that they came in contact with. A vote of thanks was given.<sup>72</sup>

Whilst the WCG helped to foster the empowerment of women as consumers, as workers, and as political agents, there is evidence that by the mid 1960s membership was waning. This was a trend in common with other voluntary societies, reflecting what Miller and Rose term 'the paradoxical effect' of state welfare as it shifts the mechanics of reform from political action to the technical and professional realm.<sup>73</sup> As Maggie Andrews observes, many

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 1966: minutes 18/08/1966 and 08/09/1966

<sup>71</sup> Rowbotham, op cit., p.288.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., minutes 28/07/1966 and 26/06/1967.

<sup>73</sup> Miller and Rose, op cit., p.77.

women's associations suffered a degree of marginalization in the post-war period as the state absorbed a variety of welfare issues within its official remit.<sup>74</sup> With their pre-war demands for reforms in home and health largely satisfied, women's groups in the 1950s and 1960s suffered a loss of political purpose, and when the next wave of the women's movement re-emerged it did so in new guises.<sup>75</sup> In Ernesettle, more enticing forms of sociability began to compete with the WCG's *tea and talk* format. Social life for young women centred on dances and youth clubs, whilst mixed membership social clubs offered married couples a mutual sociability of pub games and group day trips. Their growth and the social solidarity that they offered (described later in the chapter), may have been a factor in the WCG's contraction. Following her talk on 14 July 1966, Mrs Iris Flett 'asked members if they could suggest reasons why the Guilds were losing members, or if they could suggest anything that would make the Guilds more interesting'. The awkward silence that followed can only be imagined in place of the recorded minute: '[n]o suggestions'.

### **'They were all completely different' – teenagers and the new resources of pop**

The expansion of a global consciousness that surfaces in the minutes of the WCG, had a corollary in teenage experience, with popular culture of the 1960s increasingly reflecting a global exchange of ideas. Back at the Ernesettle youth club, stars such as Tommy Trinder and Frankie Vaughan were being supplanted by the next generation of popular musicians who offered new ways to express personal and social identities via the consumable products of an emerging youth culture. Young people eagerly adopted the visual cues of an expressive individualism, exploring for the first time the conscious choice of *lifestyle*. For Andy Strike, for example, music was, and remains, an important pillar of self-identification. Andy described to me how his friends selected from a variety of different styles associated with film stars or singers of the era in order to project their separateness:

But the days when we used to knock around together, everybody was different. We knew so many different people, even now I can picture them all, they're all completely different, they all had their own little way [...] I often sit down and think about the difference between people at

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<sup>74</sup> M. Andrews, op cit., p.126.

<sup>75</sup> Beaumont, op cit.

Ernesettle and that. Like we had one bloke called Dennis Rafton, he's still around now, he doesn't come down here a lot now. He never lived in Ernesettle but he was always in Ernesettle, used to knock around with a lot of the Ernesettle boys. And he was like completely different. He was like a chap out on his own. We called him Rocky, used to call him Rocky Rafton. He used to come down, and he used to have a blue like drape jacket and, in the old days, in the old rock and roll type jeans with the turn ups about that long! But he was an individual. And there was Reg Walker another chap, he's still around now Reg is, and he was very, you know, once again, completely different bloke again. Always very smart, Italian striped jacket and a tie and that, he was always dressed like that, very smart. Tony Snell he was another one, he was a bit rough and ready you know. They were completely [different], and like I say, you could compare that with the singers and with the artists of the day, you know, you could go through them all like Eddie Cochran, Bill Hayley, Elvis Presley, Johnny Tilotson, they were all different sounds and everybody liked a certain act.<sup>76</sup>

Here, the familiar types of 1960s pop culture legend, the Mod (smart Italian inspired fashion) and rocker, put in an appearance on the local youth scene. Yet as Andy was keen to point out, individuality was nonetheless compatible with being 'one of the Ernesettle boys'. Sartorial style was not used as a source of factional rivalry between youth (although rivalry did exist between estates, see below). Instead, as Celia Lury notes, style was used as a medium through which young people deliberately broadcast their difference from their parents' generation: 'the distinction between being young and being old(er) was created by the deliberate use of visual and other markers, the adoption of a certain style, the project of turning oneself into a coded image, a spectacle for others'.<sup>77</sup> This adoption of visual codes of youth coincided with a rejection of the institutionally-sanctioned physical culture of the 1950s in favour of a more relaxed, less *purposeful* bodily comportment.

This new casual attitude could be troubling to the external observer, implying a rejection of central citizenly qualities of Britishness and orderliness. Critics, such as Richard Hoggart, equated the new youth cultures with British 'declinism', fearing that Americanization was eclipsing 'the sturdy, self-generated working-class culture' of the inter-war years.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Strike, 2013, op cit.

<sup>77</sup> Celia Lury. *Consumer Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996, p.126.

<sup>78</sup> Jeffrey Hill. *Sport, Leisure and Culture in Twentieth Century Britain*. Basingstoke, Hants.: Palgrave, 2002, p.119.

Figure 5.9.



Full employment brought secure, disposable income to a generation of working-class teenagers who discovered new ways to express personal and social identities via the consumable products of an emerging youth culture. The expressive individualism of 'pop' appeared to represent a rejection of the institutionally-sanctioned, physically disciplined, youth movement of the 1950s in favour of a more relaxed, less *purposeful* bodily comportment. Yet Ernesettle's strong communal culture adopted and adapted to the new resources of 'pop', consolidating and strengthening an identity for 'Ernesettle boys' which was firmly embedded in the local area. Left: Teenage boys pose for the camera in their 'drape suits'. Right: Jean Harrison in dancing attire, Redhill Close, Ernesettle. Photographs courtesy of Brenda Lynch and Jean Darlby.

Sensational reportage of the mod 'invasions' of seaside towns in 1964 amplified unease about the 'irresponsible affluence' of post-war youth.<sup>79</sup> As Jonathan Green has observed,

the 'never had it so good' years of the 1950s and 60s, gave 'teenagers, newly freed by their own enrolment in the workplace, [...] more money than their pre-war peers might ever have imagined [...] In 1960 British teens spent £850 million – essentially on themselves'.<sup>80</sup>

The purchase of records or the parading of new clothing or hairstyles bespoke not just increased economic capacity, but a desire to move beyond the home and family as defining reference points in the constructions of the self. Anxieties about irresponsible youth corresponded with what Jeffrey Hill has called a 'national mood of self-doubt' prompted by Britain's declining position on the world political stage.<sup>81</sup> For the guardians of citizenship, the devil-may-care quality of teenage behaviour signalled a bleak future for the nation as its youth turned away from the constructive hobbies promoted in the era of popular leisure reform towards altogether more nihilistic pursuits.

In Ernesettle, however, the arrival of a more expressive youth culture did not mean the abandonment of neighbourly solidarity in favour of individualistic self-interest. A strong communal culture adopted and adapted to the new resources of *pop*, serving to consolidate and strengthen an identity for 'Ernesettle boys', which was firmly embedded in the local area. With their Dansette portable record player, Andy Strike's gang continued to occupy the old haunts of their early teen years, assembling at weekends and on summer evenings on a patch of turf outside the youth club they no longer *officially* attended. Inside, the collective association of the youth club enabled participation in pop music culture even for those who, by virtue of age or income, would otherwise be marginalized as consumers. Furnished with its own juke box, the club collected sixpence subs in order to build a mutual record collection, sourced according to member choices by Charlie Sells. In this way, the youth club bridged the emerging markets of youth-oriented consumerism and the economic capacity of working-class youngsters, connecting the products of international pop culture with peer group solidarity.

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<sup>79</sup> Osgerby, op cit.

<sup>80</sup> Jonathan Green. *All Dressed Up. The Sixties and the Counterculture*. London: Pimilico, 1999, p.3.

<sup>81</sup> Jeffrey Hill, op cit.

### **'They all had their own gangs' – youth and local identity**

Whilst local youngsters may have expressed their individuality by emulating their American musical heroes, shared locality was nevertheless the predominant category of group formation. Though Andy Strike and his friends borrowed from popular culture to publicly assert their separate selves, their friendship group was cemented by powerfully asserted geographic territoriality – a localized culture of aggression characterized by frequent gang fights and the mapping of local terrain into no-go areas. This was an expression of local identity that drew lines of demarcation between *us* and *them*, a relational identity that was, in Doreen Massey words, 'constructed through counterposition to the other which lies beyond'.<sup>82</sup> These *others* were, more often than not, neighbouring estates, places which in fact shared many of the spatial, architectural, and social qualities of Ernesettle. Although other areas of the city (Devonport, Stonehouse, and Bere Alston) feature in the recollection of gang fighting, the new estates, through their geographic insularity, lent themselves toward gang territoriality, their respective gangs achieving a mythic status in the popular memory of younger boys. My co-interviewer Rob Fraser recalled that a warning cry of 'the Whiteleigh Boys are coming!', could instantly scatter a group of Ernesettle lads playing in the woods that separated the two estates.<sup>83</sup> Although the fabled gang never materialised on these occasions, this modern translation of the wolf in the woods, transformed the social fact of inter-estate rivalry into mythical status in the imaginations of the children of the 1960s.

According to Andy Strike, fighting was an unremarkable aspect of the local social scene:

it was the same in Ernesettle, and like every [place]. Whiteleigh had a certain area that you couldn't go into [...] different estates, they all had their own gangs.<sup>84</sup>

This feature of 1960s social life was limited by age and gender, in my oral history group there were no accounts of girls fighting (or even witnessing fights), and Andy was keen to point out that his friends would never have

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<sup>82</sup> Massey, op cit.

<sup>83</sup> Fraser, op cit.

<sup>84</sup> Strike, 2013, op cit.

attacked anyone outside of their own age group or gender. Fighting was particularly associated with dances which attracted groups of young people from different areas of the city, thus setting the scene for inter-estate battles.

Andy recalled one typical occasion in the neighbouring estate of Honicknowle:

I used to go to the Victory in Honicknowle, from Ernesettle used to go up there then, [...] they used to have a big dance in Honicknowle at the school, and they used to get around about 300 in there. Masses. And that was er, it was a known venue for the girls. Packed down there. The evenings sometimes used to, they used to all go round the sides and everybody'd be fighting in the middle. Yeah this is true. Honicknowle dance was a real, anybody who came from another area and went into there, you were really stepping on thin ice. They used to have seven bouncers on the door because it was so rough. I've seen the band up there playing and one day the drummer was playing and they had like big curtains in behind, and a pair of arms came out between the curtains this is true this is, and just dragged him off, behind the curtain, and that's how it was. Oh yeah, we used to love it there.<sup>85</sup>

Described with a clear sense of relish, these fights had all the appearance to the outsider of aggressive brutality, but in fact the young men involved observed codes of behaviour which mitigated the possibility of serious injury or law-breaking. Contained within a uniform age, gender, and class demographic, fights did not involve weapons or serious injury although there were many bruises and black eyes. The sense conveyed by Andy's account of these episodes is not of anger and brutality, but of a performance of certain masculine obligations.

And in those days they used to send somebody around [to provoke the fight], and you knew what was going to happen, when they sent them around, you would be waiting for it to all spark off. So I said to Tony Snell, "here he comes look". So this is genuinely true, so I said "what shall I do?" So he said "well hit him". So he came round, I said "are you looking for trouble?", and he said "yeah", and I didn't know him, I hit him, knocked him out.<sup>86</sup>

The performative aspect of this masculinity parallels the 'Angry Young Men' of the 1950s literary scene whose nihilistic heroes are described by Lynne Segal as a reaction against the 'stifling domesticity' of the era, a consequence of 'class resentment but devoid of any class consciousness'.<sup>87</sup> But perhaps

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Lynne Segal. 'Look Back in Anger: Men in the Fifties'. In *Male Order. Unwrapping Masculinity*, by Rowena Chapman and Jonathan Rutherford (eds.): 68-96. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988, p.83.



more importantly, Plymouth's inter-estate rivalry demonstrates an assertion of fierce local pride – a kind of coming of age performance of estate identity that coincides with the passage into adulthood of the first generation of children. Whilst media focus was drawn to similarities of style rather than geographic affiliations, subcultures such as the mod emerged from orientations of class and locality, and in a similar way youth gangs in Ernesettle and on neighbouring estates articulated affiliations that were primarily geographic. In some ways, their skirmishes mirrored and perhaps borrowed from the coverage of similar battles for territory that were taking place elsewhere in Britain. The media panic over seaside 'mod invasions' had started when scuffles broke out between visiting Londoners and locals in Clacton, only later evolving into clashes with rival rockers, with subsequent studies concluding that negative media attention had paradoxically 'lent substance to styles that were initially indistinct and ill defined'.<sup>88</sup> Mass media had an amplifying effect, giving shape not only to the aesthetics of youth subculture, but also to the misbehaviour that it sought to control.

However, *show fights* could descend into real brutality where the outsider status of a rival gang member was amplified by their racial otherness. Andy Strike told me about his friend Mike Wilton, 'a coloured chap', the only black teenager on the estate, but a regular member of the 'Ernesettle crowd'. A constant target of racist *banter*, according to Andy's account ('we used to give him hell, but he used to take it in really good spirits'), Mike was clearly conscious that in a fighting context the gangs code of moderate violence would not apply to him. As Andy Strike recounted, when a gang fight broke out :

[Mike] said "I had to sit down", he said "cause they would've really got on to me" – seeing he was coloured and that. I said "oh don't worry about it". But he's alright. I think I would've probably done the same. I mean he would've been *really* picked on you know.<sup>89</sup>

The inclusiveness of youth culture only extended so far. Whilst a shared geography gave Mike membership into the Ernesettle crowd, it did not confer an equal status when faced with aggressive youth from other estates. The episode offers a glimpse of the experience of racial minorities living in a

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<sup>88</sup> Osgerby, op cit, p.44.

<sup>89</sup> Strike, 2013, op cit.

cultural and physical landscape where social harmony was predicated on Britishness as a unifying concept, and where that Britishness was taken-for-granted white. From the everyday racism of peers, to the knife edge separation between a benign teenage skirmish and brutal racial assault, this can only have been a challenging social landscape to navigate.

### **'As long as your hair always looks nice' – young women and leisure**

Young women in Ernesettle experienced leisure differently to young men. Bearing a greater burden of domestic responsibility (see chapter 3) as well as a greater degree of parental surveillance, their free time leisure tended to centre on the local youth club scene. Here, girls enjoyed popular music and its associated fashions and dances with equal enthusiasm to their male peers, Jean Darlby recalled 'the beautiful pretty clothes, skirts with petticoats and hoops' of her youth.<sup>90</sup> The counterpart, if there was one, to the angry young man, was the girl next door. Popular culture celebrated the ordinariness of Cathy McGowan, Helen Shapiro, and Cilla Black 'a crop of young singers and presenters plucked from obscurity by British television and promoted as the nation's quintessential teenager'.<sup>91</sup> Domesticated, pretty, obedient, 'girls next door' helped at home, took pride in their appearance, obeyed their parents, and were the passive recipients of boys' romantic interest. These cultural messages were rigorously reinforced within the family, and early marriage was one of few choices open to young women who wished to assert their independence without attracting social censure.

Under these circumstances, romance also held the promise of escape. Magazines, such as *Boyfriend* (1959-65), and its successor *Jackie* (1964-78), presented courtship narratives that permeated the popular consciousness. Pat Pott recalled her first meeting with her husband at Ernesettle youth club in terms straight out of the magazine storyboard.

I met my husband down the youth club. [...] He'd just done his national service [...] and when I first saw him he was really tanned because he'd just come home from Aden. And I was only 16, and I can remember looking at him, he was really slim and dark, and I thought "oh he's really handsome he'll never look at me!". I couldn't

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<sup>90</sup> Darlby, op cit.

<sup>91</sup> Osgerby, cop cit., p.54.

believe it when he asked me to go out with him. But I daren't tell my parents cause he was six years older than me!<sup>92</sup>

For girls in the 1950s and 60s, finding a *nice* man to marry remained a target of social life, a goal which was constructed through messages of female purity, moral responsibility, and financial dependence.<sup>93</sup> As Angela McRobbie has argued, '*Jackie* presents 'romantic individualism' as the ethos *par excellence* of the teenage girl. The *Jackie* girl is alone in her quest for love'.<sup>94</sup> For McRobbie, this message was especially pernicious for the working class reader, binding 'them to a future which revolved around finding, as soon as possible, and holding onto, 'a fella', since life without such a person was synonymous with failure'.<sup>95</sup>

Parental guidance could also support this sense of feminine romantic objective: girls were urged to care for their appearance and strict parental discipline was exercised over and on behalf of their sexual behaviour. Pat Pott's was told by her father that:

it doesn't matter if you haven't got very much you can still look after yourself. As long as your hair always looks nice and you look after your teeth.<sup>96</sup>

Such advice was a continuum of the pre-war working-class culture of respectability, appearance denoting the respectable or the rough.<sup>97</sup> Moral discipline took the form of restrictions on teenage girls' temporal freedoms, the 10 o'clock or 10.30pm curfew being typical. It was common, even after young women were engaged to be married for the curfew to remain in force, and for fiancés to be expected to depart at this time after an evening in the family home. Jean Darlby explained:

even when I was sort of 17 and coming up 18 I had to be in by half past ten. The bus used to get in at 21 minutes past, and if Dad was home [...] I had to be on that bus. Cause the other one got in at 10.31 [...] and I said "Can I be on the 10.31 bus?". And he used to say "Yes, so long as you're in by 10.30!". He used to say! So, I used to be in on

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<sup>92</sup> Pott, op cit.

<sup>93</sup> Penny Tinkler. *Constructing Girlhood. Popular Magazines for Girls Growing up in England 1920-1950*. London: Taylor & Francis, 1995.

<sup>94</sup> Angela McRobbie. *Feminism and Youth Culture. From Jackie to Just Seventeen*. Basingstokw: MacMillian Press Ltd, 1991, p.131.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xiv.

<sup>96</sup> Pot, op cit.

<sup>97</sup> Ravetz, op cit.

the 21 minutes past, but I used to walk up round and I used to stand on the doorstep and wait 'til 10.30 and walk in! So, that was my little bit of [rebellion] that was about as naughty as what you got!<sup>98</sup>

Parental discipline of teenage girls' behaviour was related to both the domesticity and the villagey-ness of post-war welfarism. As a system structured around a gendered work/home binary, the collective welfarism of the post-war era pre-supposed the reproduction of a mainly male workforce and correspondent female domestic labour, united within a nuclear family. It was therefore both socially and politically expedient to channel young girls and men towards this ideal. For young women, this was expressed in moral terms that applied harsh social censure to sexual promiscuity. The very villagey-ness of the post-war estate turned the neighbourhood into a moral panopticon with local gossip an ever-present threat to a girl's sexual reputation. Conscious of the social stigma of pregnancy out of wedlock, parents were assiduous enforcers of feminine morality through curfews and vetting of potential boyfriends.

For many young women, this policing of temporal boundaries for moral purposes rubbed up against their growing sense of themselves as economically independent agents. Young women growing up in Ernesettle in the late 1950s and early 1960s had to negotiate mixed and contradictory cultural messages: subject on the one hand to paternalistic moral discipline within the family, and on the other, treated as free adults in terms of the labour and consumer markets. These obligations came together in the financial contribution that young working women were expected to make to the household, a contribution which varied between 15% and 85% (see chapter 4). In this context, early marriage offered increased freedom since it conferred on young women the ability to determine their own timetables, and to gain autonomy over their earnings. The increasingly popular choice during the 1950s and 60s for many women, like Jean and Pat, to marry in their teens has to be seen against this backdrop.<sup>99</sup> Marriage marked their entry into the adult world of temporal and fiscal freedom.

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<sup>98</sup> Darlby, op cit.

<sup>99</sup> Office of National Statistics. 'Marriage, cohabitation and civil partnerships'. Available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Marriages#tab-data-tables> (accessed 22/07/2015).

### **'Our little corner' – men and the culture of the pub**

In comparison to their female peers, young men were relatively free to do as they pleased. They might choose to socialize with other youngsters at the youth club, or to associate with adult company at the local pub. Of Ernesettle's two pubs, the Bull and Bush, located at the centre of the estate near the shops on Hornchurch Road, was favoured by groups of men young and old. An almost exclusively male domain, the Bull and Bush hosted a culture of masculine solidarity and reciprocity that was affirmed through a local idiom of straight-talking banter. This pub, remembered as the lesser of the two public houses both in terms of architectural quality and social decorum, was also known as a destination for 'fathers'. For Andy Strike, the particular appeal of The Bull and Bush was its matey familiarity: it was 'where everybody knew each other'. Here, a sense of belonging was affirmed by a particular style of language and inter-generational exchange between men.

The Bull and Bush everybody'd be "oh you going down the Bull and Bush?". "Yeah, see you down the pub tonight" and that's how it went. [...] People used to go in and everybody knew each other you know. [...] We used to go down Ernesettle and there used to be a lot of like the fathers of the people that we used to go out with, you know, they used to all be in there. And you used to speak to them like you know "oh bloody Strikey's in here again!" like, and that's how you used to talk and that.<sup>100</sup>

Language was an important component in the assemblage of local solidarity. In contrast to their parents, whose geographic origins were diverse, the children of the baby-boom all shared the same Plymouth accent. Moreover, a bantering style of address was used to forge the cross-generational sociability of the pub. In their investigation of white, working-class, male cultures, Thomas Dunk and David Bartol argue that language and behaviour serve to maintain group boundaries, with swearing, sexist, racist, and homophobic language characteristic of an amplified masculinity tied to the nature of working-class experience in the labour market.<sup>101</sup> Dunk and Bartol argue that in working-class contexts, racial and gender exclusivity can be read as a form of class consciousness – a consequence of the emphasis on solidarity and

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<sup>100</sup> Strike, 2013, op cit.

<sup>101</sup> Thomas Dunk and David Bartol. 'Male Working-Class Culture'. In *Spaces of Masculinities*, by Bettina van Hoven and Kathrin Horschelmann. Abingdon: Routledge, 2005.

anti-intellectualism that were necessary adjuncts to labour organization and working pride in low-skilled mass employment. In this context, the importance of the male friendship group as a source of identity and support is elevated as conditions demand cooperation between workers to apply collective pressure against employers.

Sexist and racist tendencies in local, white, male working-class culture cannot be denied, nor can they be understood apart from a recognition of how they link to male workers' sense of class and regional inequality.<sup>102</sup>

In Ernesettle, the *rowdy* masculinity of The Bull and Bush worked to restrict women from the space ('you didn't see many of the girls going to the pub', reported Andy Strike), and to reinforce solidarity between working men.<sup>103</sup> A consequence also of the feminization of the domestic environment (as explored in chapter 3), which excluded certain behaviours from the home; loudness, rudeness, and rowdiness could be expressed in a socially acceptable setting at the pub.

This masculine atmosphere had an economic dimension, a generalized reciprocity that was expressed through the pooling of resources, and the buying of *rounds*. Part of Ernesettle's wider culture of necessity (also evident in feminine practices of home craft, or in the youth club juke box *subs*), the pub was an alternative site of collective economy. This 'fraternity of casual consumption with fellow workmates', formed part of the leisure time corollary of the working man's identity<sup>104</sup>. It was, as Malcolm Ward explained, a sociability that was possible even with the scantest of resources – so long as the local landlord was amenable.

We would all stick together, and whatever we had money-wise in the evening, we would all go down The Bull and Bush buy half a shandy and all sit there! Two shandies and five or six blokes there! Share it between us. The landlord was good though, he knew we used to come in just for that and he used to let us go in our little corner.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p.41.

<sup>103</sup> Strike, 2013, op cit.

<sup>104</sup> Cross, 1993, op cit.

<sup>105</sup> Ward and Ward, op cit.

Figure 5.10.



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The masculine-oriented, matey familiarity of The Bull and Bush public house had an economic dimension: a generalized reciprocity expressed through the pooling of resources by buying 'rounds'. Part of Ernesettle's wider culture of necessity, the pub was one site of collective economy. The old Bull and Bush sign, photo courtesy of Rob Fraser.

The supportive nature of this reciprocal culture sheltered other forms of associational activity. As later sections will explore in more detail, the Bull and Bush was a social centre from which several teams and clubs emanated, making in their own right a significant contribution to the shared capital of local identity.

Ernesettle's other pub, The Mayflower, offered an alternative sociability. Whilst the Bull and Bush provided a leisure time extension of masculine working culture, The Mayflower was, in some senses, a home from home. An extension of the domestic environment in which whole families could socialize with their neighbours, it offered a more moderate social culture that included both genders and a broad spectrum of ages. Situated on Lakeside Drive, somewhat further away from the centre of the estate and with fine views of the creek from its terrace, the Mayflower was family-oriented, served meals, and had a *ladies bar* – not a space exclusively for ladies, but rather a space not exclusively for men. Pat Sterry, who worked at The Mayflower in the 1960s and 70s reflected on the factors which influenced the tone of each establishment:

I worked in The Mayflower, with Bill Perry [...] he was a beautiful licensee. He was brilliant you know. He taught me everything I know, and hence I went on to run my own places [...] It was a proper family orientated pub, because they never minded the children being around on the back end of it on the grass [...]. And they didn't roll out of there drunk, um, because the atmosphere was that much better, they didn't go there just to bevy up and whatever, you know, which they did in the Bull and Bush [...] So you could socialise there [The Mayflower] quite easily.<sup>106</sup>

This moderation and collectivity was, increasingly, a feature of the social life of the estate that extended into its clubs, carnivals, and communal activities. Characterised by mixed membership, family inclusivity and connection to broader geographic and social networks, as local culture became more established through the 1960s and 70s it accommodated a wide variety of external connections and resources whilst remaining firmly identified with Ernesettle.

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<sup>106</sup> Sterry, op cit.



Figure 5.11.



Compared to the rowdier Bull and Bush, The Mayflower was, in some senses, a home from home. Here, families could socialize with their neighbours, women were welcome (in the ladies bar), and *punters* could enjoy meals, or purchase alcohol for home consumption at the Off Sales counter. Top, The Mayflower public house, photograph courtesy of Barry Thompson. Below, The Mayflower regulars in 1960, photograph courtesy of Beverley Kinsella and Chris Robinson.

## **'We used to make our own entertainment – social clubs and the reciprocal economy**

The evolution in local pub culture, towards a social space that was inclusive of gender and based on reciprocal economy, achieved its apotheosis in the social club scene of the 1960s and 70s. Whilst a *traditional* expression of white working-class masculinity occupied The Bull and Bush and the dance hall, a modified (and more moderate) working-class culture evolved at the social club with its mixed membership and emphasis on shared resources. This evolution was aided by the *new* culture of the neighbourhood, which helped to reconfigure gender relations away from the binary distinctions that clung on in older working-class neighbourhoods. Rachel Dixey has noted that in locations where the working men's clubs still dominated (such as the industrial north of England), the social club continued to assert the culture of masculinity.<sup>107</sup> However, in Ernesettle (as in the new towns, see Clapson, the pioneer experience meant that (within certain cultural limits) residents could refine or redefine working-class social solidarity in ways which were appropriate to the conditions of the new estate.<sup>108</sup> This meant an enhanced presence for women in the public realm as workers and organisers (see Mrs Beck for example), generating a social climate which fostered greater co-operation and partnership between the genders. The social club with its mixed membership and committee is emblematic of this evolution.

The longest running social club in Ernesettle was the Agaton Social Club, owned by members since 1952. It started life in a temporary building beside Agaton Fort, on the southern edge of the estate. Grass roots, autonomous, and favouring working-class leisure preferences, the Agaton offered a bar, pub games, bingo, and singing, with its own piano and stage for live music. Long-term member Bill Ward described it as a place where 'we used to make our own entertainment', recalling that, in its heyday, the club 'used to have about 1200, 1400 members, [and] a waiting list for membership about as long as your arm'.<sup>109</sup> Autonomy and self-determination were fostered by the club's constitution as well as its programme of entertainment, with profits reinvested by the club's committee in the expansion of facilities that 'they built up really

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<sup>107</sup> Rachel Dixey. 'Bingo in Britain: Gender and Class'. In *Gambling Cultures. Studies in history and interpretation*, by Jan McMillen. London: Routledge, 1996.

<sup>108</sup> Clapson, op cit., p.109.

<sup>109</sup> Ward, op cit.

well' over the years, adding to, and extending the original building.<sup>110</sup> This form of mutual association was freed from the type of institutional alignments that channelled activities at the youth club or church, offering a closer facsimile of what residents actually wanted than that provided in other social settings.

Reciprocal returns permeated the social clubs' operations, not simply at a micro-level of buying rounds, but also within the wider geography of the city. To be a member of the Agaton was also to belong to a community of social clubs in the locality. The club relied on an appetite for team games to sustain itself commercially through the mid-week lull in trade, and these extended beyond its own membership base. Through the various local leagues for darts, snooker, and euchre, the Agaton participated in a network of reciprocal visits to similar clubs, producing a small-scale economy of local exchange tied to a specifically working-class base. In parallel with the male friendship group of the pub, the social practices of the members' club reproduced and reinforced principles of cooperation and reciprocity. Bill Ward described the importance of these local networks to the sustainability of the social club economy:

When you get these clubs actually, the snooker teams and dart teams they're the backbone of the club really. Cause you've always got, you're either going away to play or you've got people coming in to play, and of course this is where you get the activity. You can always get people in on the weekend, Saturdays and Sundays. Well mostly up there it was Friday night was bingo and you used to have a crowd, and Saturday night they used to have the entertainment, and Sunday night was bingo. But it never came to very much of anything during the week, so this is where your darts, snooker, and euchre came in you know.<sup>111</sup>

Whether they were games of physical skill (darts, snooker), mental agility (euchre), or chance (bingo), indoor games were the *backbone* of the social club. In contrast to team sports, club games accommodated a wide gradation of physical and mental aptitudes, appealed across the age spectrum, and required very little financial outlay in clothing or equipment. Membership of a team provided a structuring regularity of weekly social contact, the opportunity

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

Figure 5.12.



The social club scene of the 1960s and 70s evidenced an evolution in working-class leisure culture towards a social space that was inclusive of gender and based on reciprocal economies. To be a member of the Agaton was to belong to a community of social clubs in the locality, whose team game leagues generated a network of reciprocal visits, producing a small-scale economy of local exchange tied to a specifically working-class base. The Agaton Social Club darts team, c. 1960. Photograph courtesy of Lesley Gambleton.

to travel to other parts of the city, the joy of taking part, and/or the pride of winning. It also confirmed a particular social alignment and a will to self-determination. According to Dixey, pub games' rejection of the healthy body as a criteria for competitive success, can be read as a refusal by the working classes to use their free time in the *productive* fashion that often characterizes the public provision of leisure.<sup>112</sup> Rejecting the institutional coercion to reproduce work skills in their time off, Dixey argues that working class bingo clubs<sup>113</sup>, provide instead 'a home from home, an invaluable source of companionship, a refuge which offers excitement, and an opportunity to celebrate 'traditional' working-class values, such as neighbourliness, non-intimate companionship, and the right to entertainment.<sup>114</sup> In place of the *constructive* leisure imagined by planners, there emerged in Ernesettle an alternative leisure culture that included casual sociability, team games, local exchange, and increasingly, tourism.

Whilst being a source of communal sociability in and of themselves, profits from bingo and the bar could also be used to subsidize more expensive and ambitious group activities for members. During his tenure as Entertainments Secretary at the Agaton Social Club, Bill Ward organized holidays in Britain and Ireland, and pensioners' day trips in Devon, recalling:

we had some beautiful trips, [...staying at] most of the Warner hotels. [And day trips to] Dawlish, then on to Teignmouth [...] we used to have three coachloads!<sup>115</sup>

The Agaton was not the only provider of coach trips in Ernesettle, indeed the 1960s and 70s were a heyday for communal travel. Every street, church, and club organised their own days out or holidays paid for by subscription: Graham Nicholas used to collect two shillings a week from neighbours in North Weald Gardens to fund bank holiday coach trips to Longleat, Cheddar Gorge, and Bath; the Luscombe family regularly booked seats on coaches to Looe, Weston-Super-Mare, and Dawlish organised by a man named Yorkie

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<sup>112</sup> Dixey, op cit.

<sup>113</sup> Commercial bingo halls are a relatively recent development. Prior to their appearance, following a legislative loophole in the 1960 Betting and Gaming Act, bingo was not permitted for private gain, but was the preserve of fundraising activity for charitable and communal purposes. It was, and continues to be 'a well-established feature of life in social clubs used by the working class'. Dixey, op cit.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.149.

<sup>115</sup> Ward, op cit.

who lived in Rochford Crescent; and Mrs Murphy's husband, Paddy, booked transport for the Methodist Church outings to the Devon and Cornwall coast.<sup>116</sup> These trips shared something of the communality of early 20<sup>th</sup> century working-class holidays in which entire neighbourhoods would decamp to Blackpool or Brighton for the summer wakes weeks, combining thrift and the reassuring familiarity of a well-known social group, with the opportunity to participate in local, national, and international tourism.<sup>117</sup> John Walton has written that 'coach touring lent itself to a package holiday system in which almost everything was paid for in advance [...] with its courier or tour guide, [it] provided insulation from, and reassurance about, the most worrying aspects of travel "abroad"'.<sup>118</sup> Coach travel with neighbours, therefore, mediated between the familiar and the new. Its up-front, all-inclusive payment system suited the working class market for whom budgeting was vital, and the closed-in nature of the coach trip offered a *full party spirit* that meant that new cultures could be experienced from within the familiarity of the neighbourhood group. A cultural phenomenon in itself, the coach tour was captured in the Beatles' psychedelic film *Magical Mystery Tour* which aired on BBC television on Boxing Day 1967. As tourism, nationally and internationally, featured with increasing prominence in a wider cultural inventory of leisure, Ernesettlers adopted forms of participation that reinforced local collectivity whilst they simultaneously ranged into the unfamiliar and foreign. Such experiences were made possible by the co-operation of neighbours and structured through associational nuclei such as the social club, the church, or the informal association of individual streets.

Associational culture in Ernesettle had witnessed, through the 1960s, a move away from the imagined domesticity and cultural *improvement* that shaped planners' intentions, towards a local leisure scene that was self-determined, collective, and shaped by residents' economic capacity. In its more extreme manifestations, this was experienced as an aggressive and sometimes violent

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<sup>116</sup> Nicolas, op cit.; Luscombe, Luscombe and Luscombe, op cit.; and Murphy, 2010, op cit.

<sup>117</sup> Miriam Akhtar and Steve Humphries. *Some Liked it Hot. The British Holiday at Home and Abroad*. London: Virgin, 2000.

<sup>118</sup> John Walton. 'The origins of the modern package tour?: British motor-coach tours in Europe, 1930-70'. *The Journal of Transport History* 32, no. 2 (2011): 145-163, p.158.

Figure 5.13.



The 1960s and 70s were a heyday for communal travel: every street, church, and club organised days out or holidays paid for by subscription. Coach trips mediated between the familiar and the new, allowing Ernesettlers to reinforce local collectivity whilst they simultaneously ranged into the unfamiliar and foreign. Ernesettle coach trips c. 1980. Photographs courtesy of South West Image Bank, *Western Morning News* collection, ref. WMN-2-3-1864 and WMN-2-2-1790-1.

masculine territoriality, but a more moderate communal culture emerged in parallel with it at the mixed membership social club with its team games, bingo, and communal outings. Communal sociability outside the home continued to strengthen as the first generation of Ernesettle children reached adulthood and had families of their own, drawing on the resources of what was now a universal televisual culture for their inspiration. It was in the 1970s that the Ernesettle carnival and *It's a Knockout* competitions became annual events; and that the angry young men of the 50s and 60s turned their aggression towards competitive sports, initiating tug-o-war teams and inaugurating Lakeside Football Club.

### **'Bringing everyone together' – carnival, television, and tug-o-war**

The success of events such as the annual Ernesettle Carnival and the inter-school *It's a Knockout* competitions, indicate the ongoing integration of secular and Christian social life in the 1960s and 70s. The result of efforts by the Vicar of St Aidan's, Reverend Roger Reeve, to bring all the various groups in Ernesettle together once or twice a year, the carnival included all the schools, choirs, youth, and children's groups, such as the Scouts and ATC, in an annual spectacle of neighbourly solidarity. However, the nature of the relationship between church and estate residents was now more consciously one of 'belonging without believing' as Graham Nicholas explained. With Reverend Reeve's encouragement, Graham joined the Board of Governors at Lakeside School, subsequently becoming involved in the organisation of the local *It's a Knockout* competition. Reeve was, according to Graham, 'somebody you could get on with [...] he didn't worry about whether you went to church' – an important factor in securing Graham's co-operation.<sup>119</sup>

Schools at this time also figure more prominently as instigators of local culture, alongside, and in collaboration with, St Aidan's. This consolidated organisational approach reflects the new challenges facing communal social life, which now had to compete with almost universal television ownership. Social events became bigger and more spectacular and began to borrow from televisions' obvious successes.

Pat Pot recalled that the highlight of her involvement as a Parent Governor at Biggin Hill School was participation in the inter-school *It's a Knockout*

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<sup>119</sup> Nicolas, op cit.



competitions – another brainchild of Roger Reeve. The popular television game show *It's a Knockout*, then regularly attracting audiences in excess of ten million<sup>120</sup>, proved highly adaptable for the community social gathering. Requiring only willing participants and the cheapest household props it was easy to produce in a local setting, its slapstick format an apt medium for breaking down social barriers.

The three schools used to have *It's a Knockout* every year [...] it was made of teachers and parents from each school, and it was brilliant! [...] And I had to go in a sack with Mr Wainwright [...] He was Deputy Headmaster, handsome man I can remember cause I was embarrassed. [...] I had to get in the sack with him, and we had to roll over (bear in mind I was young then, I was a young woman then), my husband wasn't very happy. [...] So I had to get in this sack and roll over with this lovely nice teacher, and try and burst these balloons! It was hilarious! When I think about it now! [...] But that was really bringing all the, everyone together because you had all children from all the schools cheering the teachers and their parents on. I can remember mostly being in that sack!<sup>121</sup>

Rather than diminishing community action, television became a source of inspiration for collective sociability. Another popular television show, *Miss World* (the most watched show of 1970)<sup>122</sup>, also inspired its own local imitation in the *Miss Ernesettle* competition, a feature of the local carnival until its demise in 1990s. The visual emphasis of television may have subtly re-oriented the nature of gender stereotypes, moving away from spatial/occupational designations of work and home, and towards a reinvigorated focus on physical ideals masculinity and femininity. Popular interest in *Miss World* was one manifestation of this reorientation. Its masculine counterpart in Ernesettle was the tug-o-war competition, an entertainment spectacle that combined the display of masculine strength and team work with an articulation of local identity. Local tug-o-war teams, including one from Ernesettle's Bull and Bush, toured Devon and Cornwall fetes on summer Saturdays, sometimes attending three or four in a day.

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<sup>120</sup> The high point for *It's a Knockout* audience figures came in November 1979 when 15.6million people watched the show. Hayes, Alan. 'History, It's a Knockout', in Alan Hayes and David Hamilton, JSFnet GB 2003-2015 n.d. Available at: [http://www.hiddentigerbooks.co.uk/jsf/history\\_its\\_a\\_knockout.htm](http://www.hiddentigerbooks.co.uk/jsf/history_its_a_knockout.htm) (accessed 23/04/2015).

<sup>121</sup> Pott, op cit.

<sup>122</sup> Despite feminist protests, *Miss World* achieved monumental television audiences throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In 1970 in the UK, it was the single most-watched show of the entire year. *Miss World*, 2014 Available at: <http://www.missworld.com/History/> (accessed 12/07/2014).

Figure 5.14.



The Ernesettle Carnival brought schools, choirs, clubs, and residents together in an annual spectacle of neighbourly solidarity. Photographs of the Ernesettle Carnival 1970s: children's races (top), and Marilyn Luscombe, Carnival Queen with attendants (below), plus MP David Owen, guest of honour, in background. Photograph courtesy of South West Image Bank, *Western Morning News* collection, ref. WMN-2-2-1288-1, and WMN-2-2-1288-2.

Mirroring the economic reciprocity of the social club or pub darts league, tug-o-war existed within a context of grass-roots summer fetes and carnivals taking places in villages and estates across the locality. The boyhood rivalries of teenage tribalism were now channelled into more controlled physical contests that concluded with back slaps and handshakes rather than black eyes.

The Bull and Bush tug-o-war team were a serious outfit managed by resident Gerry Ashton who trained with members two or three times a week down by Ernesettle Creek. A 'half a ton' granite block was attached to an improvised pulley provided the weight to build their strength.<sup>123</sup> As social anthropologist Noel Dyck has observed, sports are disciplinary regimes, forms of bodily practice whose objectives (team co-ordination, improved athletic prowess, and the performance of socially valued attributes) 'represent an amalgam of social purposes and culturally mediated understandings of the body'.<sup>124</sup> For the audience, the visual spectacle of tug-o-war offered a celebration of masculine strength, but as Mr Ashton recalled, within the team itself, commitment was of higher value than brute strength:

Those who didn't turn up for training you'd forget about they, the ones that's training they'd deserve to go in the team. We had a 88 stone team, it was a light team. A lot of the teams we were pulling against were heavier but we'd still pull them out. You've got to work together, if you don't work together it's no good.<sup>125</sup>

Team member Noddy Phillips reiterated this appraisal of the sport's value. For Noddy, the satisfaction of tug-o-war was the *participation* and the *fellowship* of respected peers, expressed with hearty civility:

[t]hat was the participation. Big blokes used to go and shake hands. When you'd finish a round [you'd] stand up, go past each other and shake each other's hand. Never had a bad word to say to each other: "Good pull!", "Hellish pull boy!" . Yeah it was a good laugh.<sup>126</sup>

Tug-o-war provided social reinforcement of the value of masculine strength, team work and peer approval, but equally importantly, the team itself served, in Dyck's words, as 'a repository of identity'.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Ashton and Ashton, op cit.

<sup>124</sup> Noel Dyck (ed.). *Games, Sports and Cultures*. Oxford: Berg, 2000, p.25.

<sup>125</sup> Ashton and Ashton, op cit.

<sup>126</sup> Ronald (Noddy) Phillips. Interview by Rob Fraser, 09/10/2012.

<sup>127</sup> Dyck, op cit., p.33.

Figure 5.15.



By the 1970s television became a source of inspiration for occasions of collective sociability which now had to compete with almost universal TV ownership. The Miss Ernesettle competition (top) was one example of such cultural cross-fertilisation. Its masculine counterpart, tug-o-war, combined the display of manly strength and team work with a proud articulation of local identity. Top, Young Miss Ernesettle winner, courtesy of South West Image Bank, *Western Morning News* collection, ref. WMN-2-2-275-2. Below, Ernesettle's Bull and Bush tug-o-war team, courtesy of Geoff Ashton. Back row: Steve Ashton, Ronnie Love, Brian Taylor, Dennis Phillips, Geoff Ashton. Front row: Noddy Phillips, Derek Bond, Graham Bevan.

The local geography of carnivals and fetes, which formed the competitive environment for tug-o-war was similar to that of the dancehall sites of teenage tribalism, but the sport was more than an expression of territoriality. The ritual of regular training by the creek, the highs and lows of wins, and the losses formed the basis of collective memories that bound the team members to the locality and to each other, but also to the wider networks in which tug-o-war was performed. Carnivals and fetes staged a ritual celebration of belonging to the home neighbourhood, but in addition, through the performance of their competitive elements such as tug-o-war, participants also practiced their membership of a broader geographic community that also included other estates and villages across the city and region. The self-supporting economy of the carnival underpinned by small financial transactions (cakes sales and penny sideshows), was strengthened by this wider geography of regional participation and reciprocity which brought to each local setting a wider audience and more income. A comparable reciprocal economy of exchange could also be found in the local amateur football league.

### **'Keep your money, we'll keep Lakeside' – Sunday league and local identity**

The amateur football scene that developed in the 1970s had much in common with tug-o-war – not least in an overlap in membership. In 1973 Noddy Phillips, with his brothers Dennis and Kevin, and neighbours Derek and Robby Bond, formed Lakeside Athletic, a Sunday league team named after Lakeside Drive, the street in Ernesettle where they lived. The club had some success over the following decades, winning the league several times, and in 2010, 'doing the double' with both league and knock-out cup victories (an achievement that was celebrated with an open top bus parade at our revived summer fete in 2010). Like tug-o-war, Sunday league football served to articulate both gender and local identities. To members and spectators, the sport offered the opportunity to practice or appreciate masculine athleticism, whilst providing a shorthand for the mobilization and articulation of local pride. The central significance of locality invested in the Sunday league side was clearly described by Noddy as he explained that the intensity with which the team name was protected:

Many a time people wanted us to change our name, but I said "No, you keep your money, we'll keep Lakeside" and we struggled on. Sponsors was there, I'm not saying they wasn't, but they wanted the name, like

Neals Cleaners or something like that, but we didn't want to be called Neals, we wanted to be called Lakeside and we stayed Lakeside. So we threw money away cause we wanted to keep the name. So we always struggled [financially]. But like I say the community helped, buy raffles and whatever. We used to make our money back with the club. We always made something or always tried to.<sup>128</sup>

As Noddy acknowledged, whilst players were not paid, Sunday league football necessarily incurred some costs – in the purchase of kits, travel to fixtures, payment of administrative fees to the County Association, and so on. In Lakeside's case, advertising sponsorship was refused on the basis that it would dilute the team's connection to Ernesettle, and financial support came instead from within the community. In this way, many local individuals gained a sense of ownership of this repository of local identity, Lakeside Athletic offering, at very small cost, a way of articulating and demonstrating a sense of belonging.

The relaxation of attitudes towards Sunday football also marks the continued erosion of the religious sanctity of the Sabbath and the wider cultural acceptance of Sunday leisure outside the family. Sunday league football, a popular but not officially recognized sport in the 1940s and 50s, was officially endorsed by the English Football Association in 1964,<sup>129</sup> after which, formal leagues began to take shape under the administration of local County Football Associations.<sup>130</sup> As the religious revival of the 1950s waned, football clubs provided, in its place, what Varda Burstyn has labelled, 'a secular sacrament'.<sup>131</sup> A measure of local self-confidence, the inauguration of home-grown sporting teams demonstrated a will to initiate self-determined, popular leisure outside of institutional settings, forging new affiliations to connect people to place. Providing a secular repository for local identity, sporting struggles, argues Burstyn, produce an intensity of feeling that 'approximate[s] the experience of religion more than any other cultural practice', a fervency that was captured in Noddy Phillips's declaration that 'Lakeside was my blood'.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Phillips, 2012, op cit.

<sup>129</sup> Taylor, op cit.

<sup>130</sup> In the professional league Sunday matches continued to be outlawed until 1974 when pressure from the three day week prompted a removal of the Sunday ban, although the ban remained in force for high profile games until the 1980s. Dave Russell. *Football and the English: A social history of association football in England, 1863-1995*. Preston: Carnegie, 1997.

<sup>131</sup> Varda Burstyn. *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999, p.18.

<sup>132</sup> Burstyn, op cit., p.18; and Phillips, 2012, op cit.

Sunday league football, along with the relaxation of Sunday trading laws, placed changing demands on weekend leisure time. For Noddy, this meant a personal negotiation between competing loyalties of family, work/money, and team/locality:

I never worked Sundays, I give up all my time and God knows what for [Lakeside]. I mean the kids suffered more than anything because I ran it.<sup>133</sup>

Noddy's experience of the shifting priorities of Sunday coincides with that of Pat Sterry, who worked in the *Mayflower* on Sundays but could not tell her mother because this was a transgression of Christian principle. A generational difference in the observation of Sunday sanctity indicates the shifting centres of weekend leisure from church and home, to secular sites in the neighbourhood. This evolution brought with it a new emphasis in the construction of group identity: from the 'belonging without believing' of 1950s church membership, to a belonging that was self-consciously embedded in Ernesettle and articulated through teams or clubs.

A glance at the Plymouth Combination League honours board supports this idea of an evolution in local identity as mediated by amateur football from the 1950s onwards. The league in the 1950s is dominated by workplace teams such as the City Engineers Department, the Royal Navy Barracks, and Lee Moor Quarry, but by the late 1960s the names of local estates begin to feature in the winners' tables, with Ham Villa, Woodlands (Honicknowle), Lion and Column (Ham), Whitleigh Utd, and Lakeside all taking honours during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s.<sup>134</sup> That some of these teams were directly associated with estate pubs – the Lion and Column in Ham, and Lakeside Athletic themselves 'were originally a pub side', according to Noddy – is significant.<sup>135</sup> Within the walls of the pub itself, its masculine culture may have appeared conservative, exclusive, and closed, but its fraternity fostered the creation of teams who became ambassadors for the estate, generating focal points of identification.

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<sup>133</sup> Phillips, 2012, op cit.

<sup>134</sup> Plymouth and West Devon Combination football league, n.d.

<sup>135</sup> Phillips, 2012, op cit.

Figure 5.16.



As the religious revival of the 1950s waned, football clubs provided in its place 'a secular sacrament'.<sup>136</sup> Amateur football gave the masculine culture of the pub a collective social purpose, extending its relevance and reach into the local community and the wider locality. Reciprocal networks generated mutual returns for kindred clubs, whilst simultaneously giving expression to hyper-local place-based allegiances.

Lakeside Athletic football team photographed in their double winning year, 2010, courtesy Rob Fraser.

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<sup>136</sup> Burstyn, op cit., p.18.



Whether as players or spectators, local residents could claim a stake in the fortunes of Lakeside, a share in their glories or defeats, reinforcing an emotional attachment to place. Amateur football and tug-o-war gave the masculine culture of the pub a collective social purpose, extending its relevance and reach into the local community and wider locality. Reciprocal networks confirmed the class alignments of this culture generating mutual returns for kindred clubs, born from similar social and environmental circumstances, whilst simultaneously giving expression to specific hyper-local place-based allegiances.

The leisure culture that evolved in Ernesettle over a period of 30 years re-asserted working-class leisure choices, but it did so in ways which actively reproduced citizenly qualities of duty, solidarity, and reciprocity, and which proudly articulated allegiance to the neighbourhood and its community.

## **Conclusion**

From the arrival of the first settlers in the late 1940s Ernesettle residents adopted the resources of the neighbourhood and forged from them structures of belonging.

In the early years, communal leisure had a *domestic* character, experienced as a family and centring on the immediate environment of the neighbourhood. Local churches served to anchor this social life, providing a convenient shortcut to community for the new residents, and a practical reinforcement of dominant discourses of citizenship. The duties engrained in the Christian mission of service mirrored the collective obligations of the citizen to act in the interests of his/her neighbours, whilst the sanctity of Sunday helped to stabilize and sustain the nuclear family and gendered domesticity. Religious faith was a matter for personal negotiation, but participation in some aspect of church social life was almost universal, uniting the community through the regular repetition of Sunday habits in church, at home, and in the neighbourhood. Communal leisure coalesced around church buildings, and through evening and weekend activities. Sunday services, with their choirs and regular parades for Scouts, Guides, and, Boys Brigade, socialized children in the qualities of democratic civility: group discipline, gender norms, co-operation, and Christian morality. This pattern of weekly activity fostered a sense of uniformity that could be interpreted as both socially cohesive and

individually oppressive. Yet within this normative social environment, church could also offer an escape from domestic tyranny, providing social and psychological sanctuary outside the home, and an opportunity for women to take public roles as community organizers, church wardens, or choir mistresses. The importance of women such as Mrs Beck in the production of local culture cannot be over-stated, her contribution to neighbourhood life uniquely facilitated by a combination of feminine domesticity, Christian faith, and personal energy.

As the estate matured so did its sites of belonging, expanding beyond the neighbourhood and beyond the family. A shift towards the secular brought new resources for the articulation of individual and group identities in the form of popular music, fashion, and television. Whilst pop culture traded on the unique brand image of its stars, this *individual identity* was the source of social collectivity for Ernesettle's youth who pooled their resources to assemble record collections for the juke box, or adopted the styles that identified them to their peers as discerning consumers. The strength of local identity was transformed by young men into an assertive territoriality made visible through performance fights at dances across the city. However, a sense of belonging underpinned by post-war discourses of national continuity could manifest a darker side when estate-outsider-status was compounded by racial difference. In such circumstances, the benign tribalism of fighting for *show* balanced on a knife edge with the violent defence of white British ethnicity. At the same time, local social nodes provided the base from which to safely explore other places and cultures. National and international coach trips were made possible via the co-operative economy of the social club or church, broadening cultural horizons whilst reaffirming social ties to the neighbourhood.

The articulation and consolidation of local identity via participation in networks of reciprocal exchange affirmed a growing confidence through the 1970s. The working-men's culture of the Bull and Bush was liberated from its base in the pub and invested with a more expansive social purpose. Men such as Geoff Ashton and Noddy Phillips sacrificed family time for communal ends. Their self-initiated tug-o-war and football teams took on an ambassadorial role, doing battle under the Ernesettle banner at carnivals and football pitches across the city of Plymouth and the wider region. These teams served as a

repository for local identity – the locus for collective memories of mutual effort, victory, and defeat. Sport surpassed church as the principle cultural unifier, providing a new focus for communal Sunday activity, its home-grown networks confirming the class alignments of a grass-roots culture and generating mutual returns for kindred clubs. The rise of mass entertainment inspired local imitations. Televisual spectacles such as, *It's a Knockout* and *Miss World*, were appropriated and reproduced within the local cultural of the carnival to unite the community through spectacles staged on Ernesettle Green.

For the generation who arrived in Ernesettle as young adults or who were raised there as children, a powerful sense of local identity has endured to the present day, evident in attendance at Jean Darlby's annual reunions<sup>137</sup> and in the wide membership of the Ernesettle Archive Facebook page. However, for those born to subsequent generations the cultural anchors of this sense of place have been denuded, linked but not limited to physical changes in the neighbourhood. From the late 1970s onwards, the foundations of family, work, and neighbourhood were undermined by a combination of incremental and dramatic developments that ultimately reversed the community confidence of the carnival's heyday.

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<sup>137</sup> For ten years Jean Darlby has organised an annual *get-together* for residents of her generation at Ernesettle's Agaton Social Club. Rob Fraser and I attended on several occasions, a valuable boost to the project in terms of informal research and participant recruitment.

## Chapter 6 – Losers: neighbourhood change since the 1980s

Call up the craftsmen  
Bring me the draftsmen  
Build me a path from cradle to grave  
And I'll give my consent  
To any government  
That does not deny a man a living wage<sup>1</sup>

Released in February 1985, towards the end of the year-long miners' strike that had started in the previous March, Billy Bragg's *Between the Wars* EP called up a vision of the genesis and legacy of the post-war settlement at a point in history when the power of organized labour was on the brink of being extinguished. Reaching number 15 in the UK pop charts, this folk-punk ballad called forth a narrative of working-class ascendancy as a galvanizing force, to give courage to a movement facing the possibility of extinction. In 2016, as a Conservative majority government retrenches to consolidate and intensify its programme of welfare-targeted austerity, Bragg's anthem seems an apt swan-song to this thesis, its release date coinciding with the chronological close of the Ernesettle high life, its lyrics reminding us that loops of historical memory are reinvigorated and mobilized with a purpose, their flavour the more bitter or sweet in contrast to the taken-for-granted taste of contemporary experience.

As the hammer seems poised to fall on the final nail in the coffin of state-supported welfare, there has been a revival of popular interest in its achievements: from Danny Boyle's celebration of the NHS in the 2012 Olympic Games opening ceremony, to Ken Loach's 2013 documentary film *The Spirit of 1945*, to broadcaster Danny Baker's 2015 autobiographical TV comedy *Cradle to Grave*, nostalgia for the welfare state is, apparently, everywhere. However, as I argued in the introduction, such nostalgia is imbued with a critical edge; it flags differences, not only in material experience, but in attitudes and ways of understanding society. The transition

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<sup>1</sup> Billy Bragg, *Between the Wars*, EP record, 1985.

from social government to advanced liberalism at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has not simply resulted in the loss of a range of material and social entitlements (health, housing, education, and employment) once enjoyed by the working class. It has also introduced new attitudes to these material and social elements, replacing a universal basic entitlement with, in many cases, a market relationship. The entrepreneurial mind-set, which is a necessary adjunct to this market relation, is one of *aspiration*, a competitive ambition to prove one's worth through material goods, money, and mobility. The intensity and singularity of this attitude is new, and it comes at a social cost for council estate residents. As broadcaster Danny Baker reflected of his childhood in a Bermondsey council flat:

the working-class council estates in London, I never wanted to live anywhere else. We were not aspirational. People weren't aspirational [...] We absolutely loved it there.<sup>2</sup>

Falling in love with a council estate, whether in London or elsewhere, is not easy these days. Assaulted on all fronts, they face an uphill, perhaps unwinnable, battle to achieve the respect and affection they inspired in the post-war years. Reflecting on the changes in Ernesettle since 1980, the overwhelming sense is one of loss. Loss of amenities, loss of work, loss of schools, loss of shops, loss of street life, loss of childhood freedom, loss of reputation, and, ultimately, loss of confidence. In a purely comparative sense then, Ernesettlers today are undoubtedly losers – stripped of many of the physical and social advantages that their grandparents and great-grandparents' generations enjoyed. In common parlance too, Ernesettlers may be labelled losers, stigmatized by association, their estate now locally synonymous with the wilful malingering that popular opinion attaches to those in receipt of welfare assistance. What has happened to effect this reversal? Is it really credible to conceive that Ernesettle residents themselves are the masters of their own fall from grace – that they are *losers* in both the comparative and colloquial senses of the term? In this final chapter I examine this question, scrutinizing the linkages between physical change and social reputation to consider how a process of working-class incorporation that appeared to have achieved so much by the late 1970s, was undone in the decades that followed.

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<sup>2</sup> Danny Baker, interview by Adam Sherwin, "The Seventies grim? Not down my way says Baker," *i newspaper* from the Independent (25 August 2015).

Today, Ernesettle scores 1.5 on the Government's National Indices of Deprivation<sup>3</sup>, which puts it amongst the top 15% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country.<sup>4</sup> Average life expectancy is three years less than the average across Plymouth, and 12 years below that of the city's most affluent area.<sup>5</sup> The estate today contains more houses and fewer amenities than in the 1950s, approaching exactly the kind of residential dormitory that its designers were so keen to avoid. The Methodist church closed in 1985, and was demolished and replaced with flats. St Aidans Church and its adjacent hall were demolished in 2004 and rebuilt at a fraction of their original size (with more flats alongside). The congregation rarely exceeds single figures and a Sunday service takes place just once a month. A number of residential infill developments have filled in green space or replaced redundant school, pub or church buildings, all significantly denser than the houses of the late 1940s and early 1950s. Housing tenure has been transformed by the introduction of 'Right to Buy' in the 1980s, and according to the 2011 census, 50% of the area's housing stock is now privately owned. In 2009 Plymouth City Council transferred all of its remaining housing stock to social landlord, Plymouth Community Homes, who, as a result of favourable government funding only available to independent housing associations, subsequently implemented a £168 million programme of refurbishment across the city.

Education and work in Ernesettle have altered even more dramatically. The post-war baby boom did not last indefinitely, and two schools were closed in the 1980s following a decline in the school-age population: Lakeside Infants School in 1981, and Ernesettle Secondary School in 1983. Ernesettle's industrial area employs a tiny proportion of its former workforce, its major loss being the Bush Radio factory (sold to Toshiba in 1981, and finally closed in 2010), many of the site's buildings now demolished or repurposed. In the same timeframe, decades of lay-offs at Plymouth's dockyard and

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<sup>3</sup> Ernesettle is divided between two sub-areas in the measurement of National Indices of Deprivation. This figure is an average score for both areas combined. Department of Communities and Local Government, op cit.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Public Health, Plymouth City Council. *Area Profile: Ernesettle Neighbourhood*. Plymouth: Plymouth City Council, 2014, p.1.

Figure 6.1.



In a reversal of the post-war ambition to create thriving villages rather than residential dormitories, many sites, which once hosted communal uses and anchored collective memories, have been sold and densely redeveloped as housing. Pictured above, the site of the former Mayflower public house, now 24 dwellings. Other sites which have suffered a similar fate include the former Methodist Church, St Aidan's Church Hall, Lakeside Primary School, and (soon) Lakeside Old Peoples Home – despite efforts to save it for community use by Community Asset Transfer. Top, The Mayflower c. 1960. Photograph courtesy of Barry Thomson. Below, photograph by Hilary Kolinsky, 2015.

manufacturing industries have left a legacy of high unemployment throughout the city, which stands at 3.7% in Plymouth as a whole, 4.9% in Ernesettle.<sup>6</sup>

These changes have, of course, altered the character of the area, but the resulting decline in Ernesettle's status is complex and multi-layered. The 1980s witnessed the birth of a new version of citizen subjectivity which elevated entrepreneurialism, individual responsibility, and private accountability at the expense of the various forms of collectivity that underpinned community life in the preceding decades. In the workplace and at home, mobility and flexibility have become the dominant attributes of a successful citizen, weakening the processes through which lasting place-based identities can be forged.

### **Family change / loss of trades servicing domesticity**

It would be impossible to reflect on the physical changes in Ernesettle without also reflecting on changes in family structure. The idea of the nuclear family was a powerful construct in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, informing design (see chapter 2), and producing social discipline through the reinforcement of marriage (even in clear cases of incompatibility and borderline abuse, see page 245), or the moral policing of feminine sexuality (see page 275). Yet, as we have seen, increasing employment opportunities helped to foster a burgeoning sense of female empowerment and a nascent independence (see chapter 4). By the late 1960s and 70s this was being more vocally expressed, divorce legislation was liberalised, and second-wave feminists publicly challenged the sexual division of labour at work and at home.<sup>7</sup> Alongside female employment, in Ernesettle changes in shopping and cooking habits impacted on street life, which began to lose its feminine character as well as the daily performance of provisioning practices that connected people and place.

Reflecting on these changes, Roger Beck observed that 'before the days of the out of town supermarkets everybody shopped locally and it was a good focus'.<sup>8</sup> As new technologies of food preparation and preservation arrived in the home, patterns of daily shopping in the neighbourhood were replaced by

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Abbott. *Family Affairs. A history of the family in 20<sup>th</sup> century England*. London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 138-141.

<sup>8</sup> Beck and Fraser, op cit.



weekly shopping in the supermarket. Whilst this transformation in shopping habits eased the domestic burdens of shopping and cooking, it also undermined one of the channels through which collective identity was generated and performed on a daily basis. Before the arrival of supermarkets, shopping and social life were not separate spheres but mutually reinforcing: traders, known by name, were 'almost a part of the family', and the local shops provided a locus of long-lasting social relationships embedded in the neighbourhood.<sup>9</sup> It was a form of exchange that for Sharon Zukin 'speaks to the old connection between proximity and survival, when locality excluded strangers, and neighbourhood shopping streets rather than regional malls, franchise stores and home shopping networks satisfied a need for both social community and material goods'.<sup>10</sup> Over time, however, material goods were increasingly supplied in settings which stripped the commercial exchange of its social function. Supermarkets, by their scale, staff turnover, and location, uncoupled food shopping from the culture of the neighbourhood. At the same time, rising affluence and the parallel attractions of consumerism made car and fridge ownership universal, reducing the domestic necessity for daily provisioning. Increasing numbers of private cars, combined with the competitive advantage of supermarket economies of scale, wiped out the market for independent traders and their weekly delivery rounds.

Increasing affluence had other consequences for the life of the street, leading to a decline in hand-making and making do. Higher disposable incomes and real reductions in the retail prices of clothes made by cheap labour in the global marketplace, meant that the baby boom generation could readily satisfy their desire for *something bought*, at the expense of the skills and sociability of the wool club round, or the viability of the local cobbler's shop. Over time the dominant cultural orientations of consumerism have eclipsed the sociability and economy of practices of making do and craft with the overarching desire for shop-bought clothes and brands. Ernesettle's smaller lock-up shops in Hornchurch Lane were amongst the casualties of new shopping habits, closing one-by-one during the 1990s. Within the same timeframe, the replacement of face-to-face transactions for services (insurance, banking and saving, rent collection, etc.), with the remote technologies of the telephone

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Zukin, op cit., p.206

and internet has further compounded the depopulation of Ennesettle's streets. Where once children, traders, and mothers animated the lively streets, it is now private vehicles that dominate. Ennesettle's roads are by no means ghostly, but their character has changed with the rise in car ownership. Whether parked or travelling, today it is vehicles which monopolise the appearance and animation of the neighbourhood. This has consequences for child safety and has led to the curtailment of the streets as a territory for play, in stark contrast to the experience of the early years when, as Sheila Browning recalled, 'no cars would come all day [...] You could have a skipping rope one end of the road, you know on one pavement, over to the other and turn the rope, play all day'.<sup>11</sup>

### **Cars and private priorities**

In many ways the car is emblematic of the broader cultural transformations that have occurred in the past 30 years. Not only does it serve as a national yardstick for the advancing material wealth of the post-war period (car ownership was adopted as a socio-economic measure in census data from 1971 onwards), but the private motorcar also privileges family and individual priorities over those of the community or the environment. It may be polluting, anti-social, even dangerous to use the car for a school run or short trip to the shops for instance, but these considerations rarely outweigh the personal convenience that such a journey confers to the individual or family. Experientially, the car also creates an environment in which the individual is the centre of a hermetically sealed world. The social connections that it enables across wider geographies diminish the necessity of local social ties, reconfiguring relationships in time and space. For Urry, the convenience of the car also generates complexity:

Automobility thus coerces people into an intense flexibility. It forces people to juggle tiny fragments of time so as to deal with the temporal and spatial constraints that it itself generates. Automobility is a Frankenstein-created monster, extending the individual into realms of freedom and flexibility whereby inhabiting the car can be positively viewed, but also constraining car 'users' to live their lives in spatially stretched and time-compressed ways. The car, one might suggest, is really Weber's 'iron cage' of modernity, motorized, moving and privatized. People inhabit congestion, jams, temporal uncertainties

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<sup>11</sup> Browning, Toms (nee Oxland), and Fraser, op cit.

and health-threatening city environments through being encapsulated in a domestic, cocooned, moving capsule, an iron bubble.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, the car alone is not responsible for an increasingly individualistic bias in contemporary culture – as this chapter will argue, attitudes to home, leisure, and work also affect and are affected by this drift – but few experiences can match automobility for the intensity with which it privileges the needs of the private individual or family. As part of a wider constellation of factors (including a decline in local shopping, street life, and new perceptions of safety), car use contributes to the dramatic decline in childhood independence. As territories of children's play have been condensed (in some cases to just the space of the home, or even the bedroom), there has been a corresponding diminution in a shared sense of behavioural norms or communal responsibility for their enforcement. As David Lancy has observed, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen a 'seismic shift in the culture of childhood' as collective responsibility for children has been replaced with individual responsibility. At a community level, this manifests in a reluctance to constrain the dangerous or illegal behaviour of other people's children for fear of reprisals, meaning that the widespread social licence to rebuke minor misdeeds has been all but lost.<sup>13</sup>

### **Collectivity and child socialisation**

The loss of childhood independence has impacted on the collective socialisation of children not only in terms of social discipline, but also in terms of physical attachment to the local landscape. Wide ranging free play once provided a vital element in the generation and reproduction of local identity, allowing children to develop a sense of ownership of place that included the communal grounds of woods and creek. The contemporary containment of child socialisation (to the home and school) has diminished a sense of the neighbourhood as common property, bringing a corresponding expectation that it is therefore both *someone else's right* and *someone else's responsibility*. Exploitation of the free resources of the natural environment (swimming, scrumping, or fishing), once something that *everybody did* are now the marginal interests of the few.

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<sup>12</sup> John Urry. *Mobilities*. Cambridge: Polity, 2007, p.120.

<sup>13</sup> Lancy, op cit., p.147.

Figure 6.2.



Private car ownership has changed the character of Ernesettle's streets, impacting child safety and free-ranging child's play. Cars provide an immediate environment in which the individual is the centre of a hermetically sealed world. They enable social connections spanning wider geographies, diminishing the necessity of local social ties. Top, Hornchurch Road c. 1953, photograph courtesy of PWDRO, ref. 1704/3/1/1-43. Below, Hornchurch Road, photograph by Hilary Kolinsky, 2015.

For Miller and Rose, these shifts correspond with changing discourses and technologies of governmentality. They argue that neo-liberalism replaces a 'system of solidarity and mutual interdependency' with a system in which 'autonomous actors – commercial concerns, families, individuals – are to go freely about their business, making their own decisions and controlling their own destinies'.<sup>14</sup> Within this new structure, the need for collective agreement (on social and moral questions such as child discipline) is weakened, as responsibility is conferred to individuals or families. New tensions arise as the private rights of individuals rub up against the collective inclinations of the neighbourhood. Indeed, these frictions are evident on the Ernesettle Archive Facebook page in the frequent group discussions about contemporary teenage behaviour. Instances of anti-social behaviour including graffiti, vandalism, and 'cherry-knocking'<sup>15</sup> are the subject of contentious arguments, with teen behaviour variously attributed to: lack of discipline and respect; having nowhere to go; poor parenting; and the bureaucracy involved in the officially sanctioned supervision of children working as barriers to *ad hoc* activities in the community. In the field of child/teen discipline, there has been a reversal from the sometimes severe and occasionally unjust physical punishment administered by parents on behalf of the community; to the beleaguered community who, rendered impotent in the face of anti-social behaviour, point the finger at individuals, at the environment, at parents, and at the system for their respective failures.

Young adults are also less well-provided-for than in the past. In 1978 the barn, which housed the youth club, fell victim to an arson attack, never to be replaced. With no other permanent building of a size matching that of the youth population, subsequent provision for young people has adopted a nomadic character, appropriating a succession of vacant school or shop spaces in relatively short tenancies. The impression of transience created by this lack of permanent home has been compounded by the corresponding transition in youth club funding from local authority subsidy to a patchwork of

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<sup>14</sup> Miller and Rose, *op cit.*, p.76.

<sup>15</sup> 'Cherry-knocking' is the childish game of knocking on front doors and running away. It is a cause of particular concern for elderly residents in Ernesettle.

more or less successful charitable organizations, each forced to bid for funds in the competitive lottery of National Lottery grant allocation.

Where once local identity was forged through the formative experiences of Ernesettle's youth in the consistent and familiar setting of the barn, church, or football field, under the consistent and familiar tutorship of a Fred Train, Doris Beck, Noddy Philips, or Charlie Sells, today's young people have a harder task as they try to assemble a sense of identity and place through contact with an ever-changing cast of youth and social workers whose interventions materialize and disappear as discrete projects and funds permit. The reservoir of community spirit that animated local life on the football field, at the annual fete, or in the social club has gradually become depleted. A generation of organizers and activists born in the baby-boom years no longer have the appetite or energy to manage football teams, run choirs, direct pantomimes, or initiate carnivals as they reach retirement. In some cases, their own children pay tribute to the cultural inheritance of their parents' generation with a keenness and commitment to local action, but contemporary culture no longer values this type of collective endeavour. Today's *enterprising culture* has devised new barriers to the everyday accomplishment of community enterprise that are difficult to navigate. In 2010 Rob Fraser and I learned how these barriers operate in practice when we set out to revive the Ernesettle Carnival 19 years after its last known appearance.

### **'All this legality and health and safety and all the rest of it' – community action and the de-socialisation of risk**

As outlined on page 54, since 2010 Rob Fraser and I have led the organisation of an annual fun day which takes place on Ernesettle Green. Alongside a core group of about 15 resident-volunteers, we have staged a Battle of Britain 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary fete, a Gardening and Produce Show, Olympic and World Cup themed fun days, and summer fayres. In recent years, Rob and I have attempted a gradual hand-over of organizational responsibilities amongst the residents' group. The results have been mixed: individual group members have developed skills and confidence and the organizational burden is now distributed more widely, but subsequent events have lacked the coherent vision and scale of execution that was achieved in 2010.

Figure 6.3.



The 2010, RAF (Residents Action Force) Ernesettle Battle of Britain Summer Fete. Top: The Red Barrows, Rob Fraser 'flying' centre of formation. Photograph by Hilary Kolinsky, 2010. Below, photographs courtesy of Rob Fraser.







Administration and paperwork has proved to be especially hard to delegate, with most volunteers *just wanting to get on with it*, rather than getting bogged down in form-filling and risk assessments.

This suspicion of 'health and safety gone mad' should not be casually dismissed as it signals an intuitive critique of the culture of risk management and personal responsibility that has wide-ranging consequences for community action. For Miller and Rose, the contemporary emphasis on risk reflects a society in transition from a form of socialized risk-management through welfare, to its privatization and individualization. As a consequence, citizenship itself is reshaped:

the active citizen is thus to add to his or her obligations the need to adopt a calculative prudent personal relation to fate, now conceived in terms of calculable dangers and avertable risks.<sup>16</sup>

For the individual, this means making a prudent investment in private personal pension schemes, private health care, burglar alarms, devices that monitor sleeping children, and so on; but equally, the impact of this transition is also apparent in the field of collective enterprise – the annual carnival being a case in point. The communal belonging expressed in the annual fete is now subject to forms of self-government that are at odds with the collectivity of the event itself, placing responsibility on participating organizations and their leaders rather than distributing it across the group as a whole. Examples of the 'calculative and prudent relation to fate' that pertain to a local carnival include risk assessment, risk mitigation, insurance, training, and certification: tea-making must be overseen by someone with an accredited Food Hygiene Certificate; children's entertainment can only be delivered by personnel approved by the government Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS); and the playing of music, whether recorded or live requires the purchase of a PPL or PRS license.<sup>17</sup> Further, formal approvals must be sought from local authority, from whom permission to use public space is subject to the submission and ratification of eight pages of forms, a risk assessment, proof of Public Liability Insurance, plus acceptance of three pages of terms and conditions. This is a bureaucratic world apart from Pat Sterry's gleeful recollection of the floats of

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<sup>16</sup> Miller and Rose, op cit., p.215.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.215.

carnivals past: 'standing on [a] flat bed coal lorry going around!' untroubled by 'this legality and health and safety and all the rest of it'.<sup>18</sup>

In the arena of local events, contemporary forms of risk-management are popularly (and with some justification) understood to be *back-covering* rather than the result of a benevolent concern for public safety, and as such, they are viewed with suspicion by the very people who wish to come together to celebrate their community. Encouraging resident volunteers to participate in risk-assessment has proved to be one of the hardest challenges within our local action group, because members intuit that signing-off a risk assessment will confer a deep sense of personal responsibility, if not a legal liability, should some unforeseen catastrophe strike on the day itself. Health and safety has achieved its own mythical status in contemporary culture, and many of its life-saving correctives are to be welcomed, but there can be no doubt the loss of *collective* responsibility is a deterrent to organizing events for communities, with the result that community itself is no longer celebrated *en masse* in public as it once was.

### **'It's a right dump now' – residualisation and the Right to Buy**

A loss of collective responsibility is also evident in the transformation of housing tenure from the mid 1970s onwards when it became possible for tenants to purchase their council homes. The shift in ownership of council housing stock from public to private hands has had profound consequences, not only in the upgraded appearance of some individual houses, but also in the redefined relationship between working-class people and property. With the introduction of Right to Buy, the discipline of citizenly home-making was replaced by a new relation to home inseparably connected to market participation. Home was increasingly pictured as a commodity that could, with the right entrepreneurial attitude, be traded to maximize personal gain. The new enterprising culture demanded new skills, market know-how, and a single-minded pursuit of self-interest. To capitalize to the full, buyers must become mobile consumers of property, severing local loyalties in order to extract value and ascend the next step of the ladder by moving to an area with greater profit potential. Right to Buy unpicked the sense of neighbourly

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<sup>18</sup> Sterry, op cit.

obligation that post-war housing had activated, driving a cultural wedge between home-owners and tenants. Those who could not afford to become home owners were pictured as failures, with council tenants failures of the worst kind.

Later branded by Margaret Thatcher as the 'Right to Buy', council house sales had in fact been permitted at the discretion of local authorities since 1957, but it was not until the passing of the 1980 Housing Act that the option to purchase their council home became a tenant's statutory right. Depending on the colour of the party in power, council house sales nationally had fluctuated between a low of 2,000 and a high of 45,000 during the 1970s, increasing or falling with successive Conservative or Labour administrations. After 1980 this figure rose dramatically, reaching 196,000 sales in 1982, exceeding 1 million houses sold by the end of the decade.<sup>19</sup> In Ernesettle, a number of oral history participants had purchased their council houses, many in the mid 1970s, with others following the introduction of Right to Buy. According to the 2011 census, 50% of Ernesettle's housing stock is now privately owned.

The fiscal logic for this huge privatisation of collectively owned property was the high cost of ongoing maintenance. But crucially, the discursive presentation of the policy was not only economic in its content, it also introduced a new representation of the council house dweller. The collective emphasis of 1950s texts, which had pictured council tenants as part of a national body of taxpayers, and aligned their interests with those of their fellows awaiting housing, was abandoned, replaced with a new focus on individual responsibility and private rights. Margaret Thatcher, in a Newsweek interview in which she reflected on the Right to Buy project, stated that council tenants had become 'accustomed to having no responsibility'. The success of Right to Buy, she argued, was in 'the uncovering of a remarkable character', a 'spirit of enterprise' and 'responsibility' that had been 'smothered and strangled' by the paternalism of the welfare state.<sup>20</sup> From 1980 onwards the ideological valorisation of individual entrepreneurialism began to exert an ever

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Balchin. *Housing Policy, an introduction*. London: Routledge, 1995.

<sup>20</sup> Cited in John A. Dolan. "'I've Always Fancied Owning Me Own Lion". Ideological Motivations in External House Decoration by Recent Homeowners'. In *At Home. An Anthology of Domestic Space.*, edited by Irene Cieraad, 60-72. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999, p.63.

more powerful presence in the collective consciousness, encouraging people to view housing as a commodity to be traded. Social geographer Danny Dorling, commenting on the legacy of this attitude to housing summarises bluntly,

[t]he message of this era of greed is: try to make as much money as you can out of housing as soon as you can, and give up renting if you possibly can. If you can't – then you're a loser. If you buy or sell at the wrong time, you're a loser. If you don't exploit others, you're a loser.<sup>21</sup>

Of course, the idea that only home owners were capable of taking responsibility for their dwellings was demonstrably untrue. As we have seen, the collective ideology of welfarism had very successfully activated a sense of domestic responsibility in council tenants, with quite outstanding results in the model homes and gardens of 1950s and 60s Ernesettle. And this sense of domestic responsibility had not simply disappeared with the passage of time. The injustice of being branded irresponsible or lazy was especially felt by those who had been unable or unwilling to exert their *right to buy* and now found themselves stigmatized simply by virtue of being a council tenant. As Graham Nicholas explained in defence against the societal assumption of tenants' indolence: 'Oh I know it's a council flat, it's a council house, but I've got to live in it, so I look after it'.<sup>22</sup> However, whilst many long-term tenants continued to invest in their council homes, the conditions produced by Right to Buy and the simultaneous cessation of council house building programmes, did help Thatcherite rhetoric become something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Post-1980 there was a significant decrease in the quality and variety of local authority dwellings: houses, especially three bedroom semis in popular locations, were sold without difficulty, increasing the proportion of flats, smaller units, and inner-city housing among council stock.<sup>23</sup> Council housing became increasingly synonymous with neglected estates in undesirable locations, and with the reduction in housing stock, priority for tenancies inevitably went to those with the most pressing need and lowest economic resources. Meanwhile, empowered by privileged access to credit, increasingly it was home owners who could demonstrate *domestic*

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<sup>21</sup> Danny, Dorling and Bethan Thomas. *Bankrupt Britain. An Atlas of Social Change*. Bristol: Policy Press, 2011, p.58.

<sup>22</sup> Nicolas, op cit.

<sup>23</sup> Balchin, op cit.

*responsibility* in the form of home maintenance and improvements, whilst council tenants, lacking the resources to invest in either purchasing or renovating their homes, found themselves at the mercy of depleted local authority maintenance programmes. Ironically, the slum conditions that post-war reconstruction had sought to address were now recreated as a consequence of government policy, and areas where flats predominated rapidly became ghettos of social marginalisation. This can be seen clearly in Ernesettle where private ownership is concentrated in roads with houses and good views, whilst streets such as Hornchurch Road where most accommodation is flatted, are neglected and run-down<sup>24</sup>. In Jean Darby's words, the family home in Hornchurch Road, once described as the 'best house on the estate', is 'a right dump now'.<sup>25</sup>

The visual distinction between the *improved* ex-council property, and physically deteriorating council stock highlights what John Dolan has called the 'oppositional dichotomy between "homeowner" and "tenant"', – now one of the dominant polarities in our culture, with the latter being subordinate to the former in terms of material structures of power and resources'.<sup>26</sup> This dichotomy separates those who are able to demonstrate their *entrepreneurial spirit* (and capitalise on it) through participation in the property market, and those who are not. For Dolan, the dichotomy spawned a visual corollary in the 1980s and 90s, manifested in the efforts of Right-to-Buyers to show-off their new status as owners through external alterations. Emphasising especially those alterations that sought to re-dress the former council house with elements drawn from an architectural vocabulary of private housing (the half-timbering of the suburban semi, or the stone gateposts of the country estate), Dolan observes a desire to differentiate the owner occupier from 'the subordinate grouping [of tenants] to which they, too, so recently belonged'.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The transfer in 2009 of all Plymouth City Council housing stock to the not-for-profit organisation, Plymouth Community Homes, has resulted in a significant capital investment in maintenance and upgrading that has done much to address the physical deterioration of council property.

<sup>25</sup> Darby, op cit.

<sup>26</sup> Dolan, op cit., p.62.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.62.

Figure 6.4.



Spot the difference: post-Right to Buy improvements on a pair of Louis de Soissons corner houses, Lakeside Drive, Ennesettle, with original houses (top) for comparison. Some commentators have observed that homeownership activated a desire to differentiate one's own(ed) home from neighbouring council tenants through the application surface decoration such as artificial stone rustication (as here) or timber cladding. Many Right-to-Buyers were more pragmatic, seeking instead to reduce draughts by adding a front porch, or save on maintenance and heating bills with double-glazed uPVC windows. Photographs courtesy of (top) PWDRO, ref. 1704/2/1, and (below) Hilary Kolinsky, 2015.

Keen to differentiate, to privatise, or to commodify their homes for resale, the alterations of Right-to-Buyers confirm for Dolan 'that the privatized and imagined "transcendent and externalized... imperial national identity" at the very centre of Thatcherite public rhetoric and policy has found a place in the definitions of the social self available to new owner-occupiers on former municipally owned estates'.<sup>28</sup>

Whilst, in my opinion, Dolan overstates his case, emphasising the ideological signification of post-Right to Buy alterations at the expense of their pragmatic purpose (many Right-to-Buyers simply wanted a larger kitchen, or a less draughty hallway), there is no doubt that home ownership brought to former tenants a new consciousness of the private value of capital assets and their importance as a future investment. As Chris Hamnett has observed, the late 20<sup>th</sup> century doubling in home ownership (from a third of the population in 1939, to 69% in 2001) 'has opened up large numbers of people to the potential for financial accumulation, its benefits and risks'.<sup>29</sup> From 1981-1991 council homes accounted for 46% of home ownership growth, contributing in a major way to the shift in home ownership down the class and income scale.<sup>30</sup> As such, the Right to Buy actively recruited people from the lowest income groups into the emergent entrepreneurial culture of the 1980s, within which a property asset provided one of the most straightforward ways of participating in the market. From that date onwards, the home was increasingly viewed as a commodity, a function that might operate alongside its function as a place of family shelter, or, in some cases, independently from it. For Kathy Docwra, who, with her brother inherited their former family home on Lakeside Drive, purchased by her father under Right to Buy, the value of home now acquired a new meaning, to be measured in financial rather than emotional terms.

What we done, we gutted the house and did it all up. Put new windows, doors, central heating, stripped it and did it all nice. So we sold it. Put it on the market sold it first time. [...] The same couple I believe still got it. I bought [my brother's stake] for £36 [thousand], sold it for £48 [thousand]. But we spent loads on it, didn't make much really. By the time you've renewed windows, put new kitchen in, you know, BIG house, and it was a kitchen and then it was dining room next to it so we knocked it all into one. Quite big kitchen-diner, put breakfast bar

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.72.

<sup>29</sup> Chris Hamnett. *Winners and Losers. Home Ownership in Modern Britain*. London: University College London Press, 1999, p.57.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

in, double doors to go out into the garden. Totally different from when we were kids.<sup>31</sup>

This was a 'totally different' from the 1950s in more ways than one. Not only did the post- Right to Buy house look different, but it had gained a new function as an asset of financial accumulation. Today, the ability to leverage the value of one's property assets confers a set of economic and cultural privileges that move beyond the obvious autonomy over the physical configuration of the house (the ability to extend and alter), and into the wider financial and social realms of capital accumulation, access to credit, even access to education. Furthermore, to maximise market gain, property entrepreneurs must be mobile, willing to move locality in order to step up a rung on the ladder, or to capitalise on rapid price inflation in 'up-coming areas'. This has profound consequences for the continuity of communities, and for those whose low or insecure income precludes them from obtaining admission to the privileged class of homeowners. In straightened circumstances, risk has to be carefully weighed and an entrepreneurial spirit could equally be called foolhardiness. For the likes of Malcolm Ward and his wife Jacky, who weighed their choices and decided to play safe, the missed opportunity of home ownership carried with it an indefinable sense of another life that could have been:

Malcolm: we weren't adventurous enough to buy our own house. I think if we'd have gone for it we'd have...

Jacky: We did think about it once, and I think that was before we were married. [...] Yeah I think the cost of that was about the same price as what our wedding cost you know, and we thought if we'd got married in a registry office we could've had our own home!

Malcolm: two thousand wan it?

Jacky: yeah it was something ridiculous.

Malcolm: but we couldn't get a mortgage, that's right... I think things like that.. yeah, [you wish you'd] took the plunge.

Jacky: things you wish you'd done years ago... .<sup>32</sup>

Crucially, in this new relation to the property marketplace, some people have greater chances of *entrepreneurial* success than others. Right-to-Buyers not only need the wherewithal to purchase in the first place, but also to become adept in the calculative practices of the property market. Investment in improvements must be measured against re-sale value, borrowings must be

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<sup>31</sup> Docwra, op cit.

<sup>32</sup> Ward and Ward, op cit.



costed and interest rates allowed for. The local market must also be appraised for its inflationary potential. Savage, et al. have demonstrated that 'middle-class households have been able to accumulate far more money in the course of their housing careers than have working-class households', their capital gains from property price inflation being both faster and of greater absolute and proportional value, than those experienced by working-class home owners.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the middle and upper classes are far more likely to work in the economic sector which derives its profits from movement in the property market – the finance industry. As Avner Offer argues, the sale of council housing transferred a share of national income from workers to the financiers. In the transition from social renting to mortgage repayment, housing costs previously paid by workers to the state and recycled within the public sector, were now being paid to private firms in the form of mortgage interest.<sup>34</sup> For Offer '[t]his was one of the sources of the great surge of the financial industry', which has enjoyed vastly increased profits and political influence, whilst a residue of the working class are resigned to 'a life of exclusion from the basic elements of the affluent society: [...] decent housing, income and food security'.<sup>35</sup>

### **'The future of the company rests on your shoulders' – the Toshiba take-over and new discourses of enterprise**

Whilst the financial sector expanded, the manufacturing sector saw a corresponding decline. In Ernesettle, the end of employment security destabilized the collective identity of the neighbourhood. By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century global geographies of demand and supply destroyed the virtuous circle of Fordism, undermining the ability of the nation state to contain and manage economic productivity. Factories were sold to international corporations whose operations were informed by the logic of the world market: the global price of labour and global geographies of demand. Jobs were shed and working practices *modernised* to adapt to these new market conditions. Ernesettle residents no longer enjoyed the patterns of work-related activity that harnessed their fortunes to their neighbours: shared commuting, solidarity on the factory floor, informal references, and job tip-offs all featured less

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<sup>33</sup> Savage, et al., op cit., p.88.

<sup>34</sup> Offer, op cit.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.18, 20, and 29.

prominently in everyday life. Within the workplace an increasing emphasis on productivity targets made relations with colleagues more competitive, thwarting worker collectivity and replacing the once 'lovely atmosphere' of the factory with friction and animosity. Workers were counselled to keep their heads down and their targets up to protect their livelihoods in the global marketplace of labour and goods.

Life at Bush Radio was especially affected. Until the mid 1970's the Bush factory had thrived, expanding several times during the 1960s, taking over the Smith Crisp's site and filling in a number of gaps between their existing buildings. The company's various changes in name (from Bush Radio to Rank Bush Murphy in 1962, Rank Radio International in 1972, Rank Toshiba in 1978, and finally Toshiba UK Ltd in 1981) signalling first a consolidation of British acquisitions by parent company Rank, and their subsequent international expansion into export markets. Elsewhere in Plymouth, other factories experienced similar fortunes: Farleys at Hartley expanded rapidly culminating in a takeover by pharmaceutical giant Glaxo Group in 1968. At Devonport Dockyard the workforce of 20,000 was reduced to 13,000 in the 1980s, with 3,000 further jobs shed following its privatisation in 1987.<sup>36</sup> By 1992 the workforce had fallen to 5,400, and it currently stands at just under 4,000.<sup>37</sup> During these years, ownership transferred by privatization to an international corporate conglomerate comprising Brown and Root (a subsidiary of US arms manufacturer Halliburton) and British ship-building firm Vickers, then to Babcock Marine in 2007. The mergers and takeovers witnessed at Rank Bush Murphy/Toshiba, Farleys, and Devonport Dockyard heralded a new, global structure of business ownership.

New global geographies of production had a significant impact not only on the local economy of Plymouth, but also on the economic fortunes of the nation. As national markets for consumer products began to reach saturation point in the late 1960s, and the oil crisis increased production costs in the 1970s, companies began to look outside Britain in search of efficiencies and sales. With profit margins threatened by static or falling local demand, there was a

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<sup>36</sup> Robinson, op cit.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Bishop. *The Impact of Devonport Dockyard / Naval Base on the Economy of Devon and Cornwall*. Devonport Management Limited (DML), Plymouth: South West Economic Research Centre, 1991.

drive to expand into foreign consumer markets, and to reduce costs by using foreign manufacturing locations, foreign credit and tax havens. As corporations sought global efficiencies to sustain profits, and global markets to sustain consumer demand, the ability to regulate capitalist production within a national economy began to unravel. This explosion of the formerly 'hermetically sealed economic space' of the Fordist system undermined the nation-state as the main unit of economic management, and decimated the tax base that had underpinned redistributive social policy: tax revenues from corporate profits fell, whilst unemployment, due to global outsourcing, put further pressure on the welfare coffers.<sup>38</sup>

On the shop floor, the transition from national to global economic space registered as a new configuration of relations between worker and employer. The transition was marked in Ernesettle by the completion of Toshiba's full take-over of the former Bush facility. Every member of staff was made redundant and a hand-picked selection were re-employed on new contracts six weeks later. This event, typical of the efficiencies that would strike every large workplace over the coming decades, resulted in the introduction of stricter working practices, which robbed the factory floor of the atmosphere of fellowship remembered by former employees. Working to the clock became all the more important and pressure to adhere strictly to the target-driven codes of behaviour took precedence over the more 'lacksydaisy' ways of the 1950s and 60s as Kathy Docwra explained:

I mean, I think once the Japanese took over, it got called Toshiba didn't it, they took over, and a lot of the girls that I knew [...] they said it was totally different, you got a two minute toilet break and that was it. It was really strict. Where when we worked there it was quite lacksydaisy really, got away with murder really. Although we worked hard and you did your days production. You had to do your work [but] if you were fast and you were quick and you could do what you did, you know you could go in the toilet and have your eyebrows plucked by somebody! That used to go on a bit! But it was good fun. That was my good days.<sup>39</sup>

Whilst the line hands had to adjust to much stricter behavioural controls such as timed toilet breaks, in terms of management, efficiency, and productive

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<sup>38</sup> Koch, op cit.

<sup>39</sup> Docwra, op cit.

output, the transition was heralded as a success.<sup>40</sup> In 1986 the company celebrated the production of its one millionth television set, which, alongside diversification into microwave ovens and video recorders, marked one of its proud achievements. In a paper prepared for the Planning Policy Institute, Malcolm Trevor reported that since 1981 the daily output of televisions had risen from 300 to 2,000. The company had increased its market share in the UK by 100%, and had been successfully exporting to Europe for three years. This level of increased productive efficiency was attributed to a combination of 'new work structure, employee participation, and relations with suppliers'.<sup>41</sup>

The inauguration of new forms of industrial relations required the re-imagining of the industrial worker, and a new hero of modern industry began to emerge through the working cultures of the 1980s. Inspired by the Thatcherite and post-Thatcherite construction of an *enterprise culture*, in which entrepreneurialism, self-reliance, and risk-taking were valorised, over the redundant bureaucracies of collective representation, 'the autonomous, free, choosing self ... has become central to the moral bases of political arguments from all parts of the political spectrum'.<sup>42</sup> This new type of worker identified themselves more closely with the goals and objectives of the organization, rather than with (as historically) the goals and objectives of their fellows. In a speech given by Mr Saba, the Chairman of the Japanese parent company of Toshiba UK, to the staff at the Plymouth plant shortly after it reopened in 1981, workers were reminded that they must take full responsibility for the organization's success:

Toshiba has no intention of ruling over this company. The company is yours. It is like a small mustard-seed which you took and sowed in your garden; it grows to be a tree and the birds come to roost among its branches. The future of the company rests on your shoulders. Your efforts and nothing else, will make the company prosperous and give your family happiness. Toshiba will support you in this endeavour providing you with capital and technology. Do your best!<sup>43</sup>

The transformation of management and employment relations was not simply the result of Thatcherite Conservative policy making, but it existed within a

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<sup>40</sup> Malcolm Trevor. *Toshiba's New British Company. Competitiveness through Innovation in Industry*. London: Policy Studies Institute, 1988.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Du Gay. *Consumption and Identity at Work*. London: Sage, 1996, p.72.

<sup>43</sup> Mr Saba, 26 May 1981, cited in Trevor, op cit., p.12.

much broader context of changing practices of and attitudes to the role of government, forming part of a wider cultural discourse involving new 'languages and techniques that bind the worker into the productive life of society'.<sup>44</sup> The nature of productive life itself was transformed by the movement towards a global marketplace for goods and labour. Rosemary Compton has argued that the resulting changes in working practices – increasing job insecurity and shrinking establishment size – all mean that 'employment has become increasingly likely to generate individualistic, rather than collectivist, sentiments'.<sup>45</sup> This has resulted in what Angela McRobbie describes as 'a discursive rupture': a divide between 'old work (and older workers) and new work with its more youthful workforce'.<sup>46</sup> In McRobbie's schema, old work is associated with the bureaucratic model of work patterns associated with the professions, the public sector, and with organized labour and enshrined in employment law. New work requires risk-taking activity, a high degree of workforce mobility, and an aptitude for creative, expressive, and symbolic activities. McRobbie proposes that,

[i]n exacting new resources of self-reliance on the part of the working population, work appears to supplant, indeed hijack, the realm of the social, re-adjusting the division between work and leisure, creating new modes of self-disciplining, producing new forms of identity".<sup>47</sup>

As the drive for productive efficiencies accelerated through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s the notions of worker alienation and compensatory reward through welfare/leisure that had shaped the post-war conception of work were replaced by a more vocal rhetoric of worker responsibility. Of course, what this rhetoric, like Mr Saba (above), fails to acknowledge is that the rewards of maintaining profitability through productive efficiency are only conferred on the workers in as much as they get to keep their jobs (increasingly today, paid at a subsistence level). The major financial gains of the *enterprise culture* are distributed amongst the true owners of a company: their shareholders. This is the blind spot of the culture of enterprise – it overlooks the unequal distribution of the profits of enterprise, an area of discursive opacity that the mid-century culture of work and compensatory welfare/leisure had effectively revealed and addressed.

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<sup>44</sup> Du Gay, op cit., p.53.

<sup>45</sup> Compton, op cit., p.161.

<sup>46</sup> McRobbie, 2002, op cit., p.97.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.99.

International competition eventually undermined Toshiba's early upturn in profitability and the company moved television manufacturing to Poland in 2009. For two years a depleted workforce of 54 staff continued to offer television refurbishment in a near empty factory at Ernesettle, but eventually the skeleton staff were laid off in 2011, and the site was closed. In December 2012 the buildings, including the transmission tower and commemorative opening plaque, were demolished.<sup>48</sup> The factory's history mirrors the fortunes of British manufacturing for consumer markets: Ernesettle lays claim to the bittersweet honour of producing both the first and last mass-production televisions made in Britain.

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<sup>48</sup> In a mood of general regret at the demolition, several contributors to the Ernesettle Archive Facebook Group documented the process with photographs, and more shared their memories of working at the site. I wrote to Plymouth City Council's Heritage Officer to plead for the preservation of the tower and opening plaque as two small architectural symbols of a significant local social heritage, but no action was taken by the council. The vacant site is now in the process of being redeveloped as small business start-up units and a diesel-fired, back-up, power station.

Figure 6.5.



International competition eventually undermined profitability at Ernesettle's Toshiba factory and the company moved television manufacturing to Poland in 2009. A skeleton staff continued to offer television refurbishment in a near empty factory but they too were laid off in 2011. The buildings were demolished in December 2012. The factory lays claim to the bittersweet honour of producing both the first and last mass-production televisions made in Britain.

Above: Opening ceremony of the then Bush Radio factory, 1948, courtesy PWDRO ref. 1418\_03892. Below: Demolition at Toshiba, photograph courtesy of Rick Steer, 2012.

## Conclusion

For 30 years after the Second World War, Ernesettle had enjoyed an everyday life in which work, home, and neighbourhood were intertwined, their complex amalgamation fostering social outcomes in the form of a robust community that was experienced through neighbourly relations and communal leisure. The simultaneous delivery of employment security and housing security created for the first time a corresponding *security of leisure* for working-class people, which supported individual, family, and community activities. Identification with the estate filled the void left by the decline in masculine occupational identity, whilst women, with their domestic anchors in the neighbourhood, took local factory jobs, inheriting some of aspects of a production-line subjectivity now vacated by men. Identification with the neighbourhood was practiced through occasions and social structures that affirmed loyalty to and solidarity with neighbours such as shared holidays, day trips, carnivals, choirs, or teams. In place of a class identity closely bound to occupation, class was articulated by alignments between the leisure cultures of similar places: the reciprocal networks of the social club, the football team, or the carnival.

This place-based working-class subjectivity was fatally undermined by a combination of changes that occurred after 1980. The rise of consumer affluence, its consequences in terms of car ownership, and the proliferation of supermarkets throughout the 1970s and beyond, wrought the decline of taken-for-granted domestic practices such as daily shopping. As female domestic roles were challenged by feminism and by women's increasing importance in the labour market, the coherence of an everyday life organised around servicing the domestic economy began to disintegrate. With private priorities increasingly dominating the use of space (especially through car use), social practices which required collective agreement also became destabilised. A loss of childhood freedoms and the impoverishment of street life undermine the processes and rites of passage through which place-based identity was once forged.

Within the home a new enterprising relation to property demands a flexibility and financial capacity that is not available to everyone. Post-war council housing had offered an equal status for all through modern homes that delivered a cross-class convergence in everyday experience. Its citizenship



demanded a certain domestic discipline. But it was a discipline in which market power did not count, and through which people could become socially anchored. Under the neo-liberal ideology that now defines our relation to home, what counts is money and mobility. In so far as it undermines family mobility, the forging of strong communities and neighbourly loyalty is not in step with an enterprising relation to property. A modern Ernesettler is more likely to win the approval of society at large by selling-up and shipping-out: cashing-in the fiscal value of their Right to Buy home, than they are by staying put and investing time and effort in their community. It is hardly surprising that, post-Right to Buy, these collective social practices have seen a sharp decline on council estates like Ernesettle.

Today, cultural value has shifted from the collective to the individual, a transition which has registered politically in a reduction in central government funding for such things as adult education and youth club provision. Consequently, there is a lack of consistency and continuity in such services, and their providers are no longer an embedded part of the community but are external to it. At the same time, neo-liberal logics of risk management have de-socialised insurance against risk, transferring liability for accidental misfortune from the collective safety net of welfare, to the personal liability of the individual. In the vacuum left by the dismantling of collectivized insurance, the private insurance market simultaneously amplifies risk-anxiety and offers products and techniques for its management. This new culture of anxiety and liability is challenging, time-consuming, and costly to negotiate, substantially undermining the spontaneity and collectivity of community events and curtailing the public expression of belonging that they once staged.

The end of employment security has further destabilized the collective identity of the neighbourhood, destroying the local economy and eroding the temporal *space* of leisure in which collective identities were performed. The post-war work/leisure pairing has been transformed from a binary relation in which one was a trade-off for the other, each with its own temporal and spatial zones; to a relation of increasing temporal overlap accompanied by a spatial mobility. At its most extreme, the contemporary labour market demands a flexible attitude to work spatially, temporally *and* socially: the modern worker must be prepared to go where the work is, travelling greater distances, working flexible hours, and partnering with co-workers who are assembled by temporary

contract and then dispersed. These conditions corrode processes of spatial and social root-formation, not only because they change relations at work, but equally because they alter the temporality and sociability of leisure. The shop or care worker who is obliged to work weekends and evenings cannot join a Sunday league team, or commit to organizing a carnival that they will not be available to attend. Workers in the lowest paid jobs, which demand the greatest flexibility, are especially disenfranchised from collective identity: their leisure of necessity taken on an *ad hoc* basis at times which do not necessarily overlap with others. Leisure, such as it is, becomes more family-centric, reinforcing, in the process, the de-collectivization of local culture.

Under these new conditions, a reinvigorated focus on productive efficiency has replaced ideas of worker alienation and compensatory reward, with a new image of the ideal worker – now recast as an enterprising individual. This autonomous individual must bring their personal aspirations into close alignment with the goals of their employer and take personal responsibility for the success of the organization as a means to achieve their own success. Such a transition has replaced the collective loyalties which bound workers to each other, with a competitive environment in which workers must fight to keep their jobs. In Ernesettle, the rhetoric of personal responsibility that heralded new ownership at Bush has proved to be empty. In the face of global competition, personal effort and dedication were not enough to save workers' jobs. Despite the achievement of miraculous levels of productive efficiency in the 1980s, an entrepreneurial attitude to work failed to deliver the promise of family prosperity in the long term. In order to participate in the new global geography of employment, the ideal worker has no choice but to adopt 'new patterns of individual mobility', moving to where the money is, becoming detached from the settled and socially rooted ways of work in the post-war period.<sup>49</sup>

Stripped of its unique place-based environmental attachments and practices, local identity must draw on the resources of wider culture. For the council estate tenant these resources are limited: increasingly likely to be unemployed and unmarried, council tenants have lost two of the three pillars of work, family, and nation that once underpinned the Beveridgean citizenship on

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<sup>49</sup> McRobbie, *op cit.*, p.99.

which their neighbourhood was modelled.<sup>50</sup> A residual nationalism expands to fill these vacuums, but without the institutional endorsement of the post-war era it is out of step with the prevailing current of mainstream opinion. Once mobilised as a unifying discourse across classes and regions, today's nationalism is antagonistic, right-leaning, and defensive against outsiders. As a consequence, estate geographies have become the new zones of social marginalisation, associated with a culture that is felt to be at odds with the contemporary multi-cultural spirit of the age. The urban centre has been recast as the most hopeful arena for contemporary citizenship, a model of social fusion fostering the cross-fertilization of a diversity of alternate cultural identities. Meanwhile, post-war estates, once the locus of model citizenship, now pay a high price for this historical legacy, languishing in a reputation for reactionary politics, racism, and welfare dependency.

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<sup>50</sup> Fiona Williams. *Social policy: a critical introduction; issues of race, gender and class*. London: Polity, 1989.

## Chapter 7 – Conclusion

Using Ernesettle as a case study, this thesis set out to explore the multiple factors which contribute towards how places are made and lived, tracking the physical, social, cultural and political forces that propel change and reshape perceptions over time. My intention was to shed light on how we travelled from the universal material entitlements and socially harmonizing ambitions of the 1940s, to the concentrations of social deprivation and polarizing cultural prejudices of 2016. In tracing this historical path, my research has been grounded by an effort to understand the function of housing in the pursuit of social justice, to question what, (if anything), Ernesettle achieved socially, materially and culturally, and to consider whether this might present useful lessons for contemporary policy. In this closing chapter therefore, I recap the findings of the thesis, and look ahead to apply these findings to the contemporary housing context.

Chapter 1 set the guiding questions of the thesis in the context of existing scholarship. Within the broader history of council housing with its dominant emphasis on failing tower blocks, the low rise Bevan estates of the post-war Labour administration were noted as an under-studied housing typology whose historical assessment was overdue. The ambitions of post-war politicians and planners were set in the context of social government, a system which sought to reconcile the interests of capital and labour by homogenizing rather than dividing the population<sup>1</sup>. Taking my cue from “insurgent planning histories”<sup>2</sup> I sought to approach Ernesettle as a space which was made as much by residents as by planners and architects, an approach which shaped my oral history research methodology, and the dominant emphasis given to residents’ stories within the text. The research methodology was equally informed by a critical examination of the “organizational metabolism” of academia<sup>3</sup> and an attempt to address, or at least limit, its exclusionary effects by crossing academic boundaries and working within and alongside the Ernesettle community.

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<sup>1</sup> Miller and Rose, 2008; Donzelot, 1988; Hughes, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Sandercock, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Greenwood and Levin, 2000.

Chapter 2 examined the progressive social programme propounded by post-war neighbourhood designers. The *settlement* performed by social welfare was shown to have held broad political appeal, expressed in the form of the village neighbourhood, an imaginary territory in which class tensions were smoothed away. Architecture and domestic interiors were designed to aid the smoothing-out of grades of physical difference: labour-saving devices would efface corporeal registers of feminine domestic drudgery, whilst the co-ordinated pattern of mass-produced homes would mirror the order and sobriety of the imagined citizens within. In the absence of class-based subjectivity, planners put forward family and Britishness as the anchors of post-war identity. The peripheral geography of new estates also brought family into focus. Undiluted by the muddle of urban everyday life, post-war neighbourhoods put women and children centre-stage providing well-equipped homes to ameliorate housework, and spacious domestic and communal environments to encourage healthy child development. Yet the vision was compromised by inherent tensions: it presupposed feminine domesticity; favoured white, British nuclear families; and, for all its classless rhetoric, it advanced the social, cultural and political position of its authors.

In chapter 3 I examined how this 'Beveridgean' vision of post-war citizenship was experienced in reality by the estate's first residents. Though not equivalent to the vision of the imagined village, the pioneering identity that emerged in Ernesettle was, in many ways, aligned with it. Britishness served as a unifying resource in a population assembled (through armed forces connections to Plymouth) from across the UK. This sense of all-in-it-togetherness was underscored by the shared experience of pre-war poverty or wartime trauma. A pre-existing culture of working-class respectability operated alongside gratitude for new homes to inspire (in the main) the assiduous reproduction of institutionally endorsed home-making practices such as vegetable gardening, DIY, and child discipline. A shared but gendered project, home-making discourses set out in tenants' handbooks co-opted men, women and children into a shared responsibility for maintaining the domestic and communal environment. In effect, citizenship was activated via the home and neighbourhood.

As a result of their relative geographic isolation, women became the anchors of a local culture that serviced the domestic economy in the form of street

traders, local shopping and free-ranging child's play. This home-centric life was not for everyone, and in the early years the estate witnessed a process of self-selection during which new arrivals tested their ability to adapt. Some chose the alternative life available in other locations, with central districts of the city apparently offering an everyday life in which values of work, family and nation were less dominant, sheltering the racial and sexual minorities which 'Beveridgean' citizenship marginalized.

For those who stayed however, neighbourhood culture developed a coherence that was expressed through shared agreement on standards of behavioural discipline. A culture of necessity shaped by relatively modest incomes meant that collectivity was also demonstrated through neighbouring, in reciprocal childcare, and shared sociability. Whilst consumerism increasingly encouraged people to view self-gratification as a private personal right, initially at least, consumer goods co-existed alongside collectivity in the form of sharing and reciprocal borrowing. In these conditions, collective memories began to form, clustered around sites of social congregation such as the shops, the churches and the creek. Shared experience formed the foundation of a place-based identity, expressed by youngsters as a powerful sense of territorial attachment.

Chapter 4 explored how the emergent pioneering identity of the estate overlapped with transformations in working-class, worker subjectivity. Post-war estates were shaped by an ideal image of the male worker, their amenities sheltering a host of assumptions and techniques that sought to protect and support the male breadwinner, and his dependant wife. This ideal however, was never a true reflection of the working-class reality of household work strategies that traversed gender. It was also an ideal in tension with the concurrent political projects of manufacturing decentralisation, and of full employment. New workplaces in Ernesettle provided opportunities for women's waged labour, whilst full employment displaced the certainties of a job-for-life, creating a more mobile and transitory experience of work, especially amongst men. These changes opened up a fault line between a pre-war generation raised to value masculine job security and financial responsibility, and a post-war generation who could afford to take more flexible attitudes to work. Whilst men could choose to 'chase the money', moving across wider employment geographies, women began to inhabit the

production line identities men had vacated. With family obligations which kept them anchored to the neighbourhood, it was women workers in the new factories who increasingly displayed worker solidarities and collective loyalties which further complemented and amplified the collective identity of the neighbourhood.

The security of full employment had a corollary in a security of leisure which was examined in chapter 5. As working-class consciousness became unhitched from the traditional anchors of masculine worker identity, over time this consciousness regrouped along new alignments of shared leisure experience networked through similar places and estates. The church-based social life of the early years provided a short-cut to communal sociability, laying the foundation for a home-grown leisure culture. Its Sunday schools, clubs and choirs socialized children in group discipline and co-operation, and provided opportunities for women to take public roles as community organisers. As the estate grew in confidence and character, this religious resource proved less and less necessary. The strength of local identity was evident in an assertive masculine territoriality made visible through gang fights with other estates. A shift towards the secular also brought new resources for the articulation of identities in the form of music, TV, and fashion, which were explored collectively within the local cultures of the youth club, carnival, pub, social club. These centres of collective leisure became embedded in networks of reciprocal exchange. Often centering on sports or games, their teams took on an ambassadorial role within the wider geographies of city and region, and serving as repositories of local identity that both articulated the geographic boundaries of community, and connected with other similar places.

The darker side to such a powerful sense of collective identity was revealed in moments when alternative sources of distinctiveness rubbed up against local subjectivities. This was noted in the context of teenage tribalism when estate outsider status was compounded by racial otherness, leading to a fear that benign show fighting might descend into real violence. The oppressive coherence of local morality was another source of tension, largely hidden within private domestic lives. Some unlucky women (and presumably, men) were trapped in unhappy marriages, whilst the enforcement of child discipline was, by present day standards, excessively violent. Such tensions, though

rare, reveal the horizons Beveridgean citizenship, with its emphasis on white Britishness, heterosexual marriage, and family cohesion. Yet with these qualifications, a home in Ernesettle nevertheless advanced the material and social inclusion of most residents, drawing them into the cultural mainstream of society via the social, cultural and economic life of the neighbourhood. The result was a self-confident and semi-autonomous working-class culture that was expressed through reciprocal networks that connected to similar communities.

In the transition to advanced liberalism since the late 1970s (described in chapter 6), this social and cultural incorporation of the poorest classes has been reversed, such that council estate residents are now routinely demonized.<sup>4</sup> The coherence and resilience of estate identities have been significantly undermined on multiple fronts, often (but not always) as a result of the marketization and deregulation of housing and work. The loss of local manufacturing to global locations and the rising expectation of worker mobility combine with a new mobile speculative relation to property in which people must move to fully exploit the potential rewards of climbing the property ladder. Together, these factors destabilise community practices which are socially and geographically rooted, resulting in a significantly diluted sense of local pride and self-confidence.

In parallel, the past 40 years have witnessed the disintegration of an everyday neighbourhood life that was formerly organized around the domestic economy. Increasing women's employment and the weakening of the sexual division of labour have combined with the proliferation of supermarkets and car ownership to reshape the everyday occupation of streets and houses. Private priorities, especially in the form of car use, increasingly dominate the experience of neighbourhood space, whilst social practices that require collective agreement (such as shared child supervision) have seen a dramatic decline. There is a consequent loss of the processes and rites of passage through which place-based identities are forged, a fact which is compounded by the decline in public celebrations of community such as carnivals. Such public expressions of belonging are hampered by the desocialization of risk that has occurred through a transition from the safety net of collective social

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<sup>4</sup> Jones, Owen, *op cit.*



insurance to the now dominant private market for products and services that promise to protect personal liability.

Ernesettle is not alone in experiencing this transition, neither are issues relating to the disintegration of working-class communities exclusively associated with council estates.<sup>5</sup> Government subsidized regeneration, however, is frequently targeted at council estates, most recently in Prime Minister David Cameron's pledge in January 2016 to 'blitz' poverty by ploughing £140m into 'sink estates'.<sup>6</sup> Such interventions have historically corresponded with physical improvements or redevelopment, perpetuating the perception that environmental factors are the root cause of social dysfunction, and frequently ushering in gentrification alongside the expulsion of problem residents. In the case of Ernesettle, environmental factors are the least of the estate's problems. Indeed, the quality of the neighbourhood environment remains largely intact.

What can we learn from Ernesettle then that might help to address pressing issues in communities across Britain, especially in the light of the transition from social government to advanced liberalism? Given that the unique conditions of the post-war period cannot be recovered, is it possible to imagine that any of the positive lessons of post-war social housing are repeatable? Is there a future for council estates beyond the supporting context of wartime reconstruction, trade union power, consensus politics, feminine domesticity, British racial and cultural homogeneity, and the nationally bounded Fordist economy? At times the rumination of this question has left me quite despondent. We cannot wish to return to a society in which citizenship is based on an inflexible and homogenizing vision of Britishness and family life, with all their attendant racial, sexual, and gender exclusions, any more than we would wish to repeat total war as a productive catalyst for post-war social change. Nor can we realistically expect to reverse the

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Lee and Alan Murie 1997. *Poverty, housing tenure and social exclusion. Report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation*. 1997. Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/poverty-housing-tenure-and-social-exclusion> (accessed 01/02/2016).

<sup>6</sup> David Cameron quoted in 'David Cameron vows to 'blitz' poverty by demolishing UK's worst sink estates'. *The Guardian*. 1996. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jan/09/david-cameron-vows-to-blitz-poverty-by-demolishing-uks-worst-sink-estates> (accessed 03/02/2016).

hegemonic grip of global capitalism, or to challenge the perfectly rational desire for homeownership that continues to sustain demand for the Right to Buy. So what can be learned from the model of post-war housing that might be replicable under contemporary conditions?

Recent analyses of community resilience can help to approach these questions, providing the tools to measure a community's ability to respond to change prompted by, for example, globalization or environmental disaster.<sup>7</sup> The social science of community resilience is still in its infancy, but models such as that developed by Geoff Wilson give shape to the discussion of the multiple factors that provide communities with stability and tenacity.<sup>8</sup> Wilson proposes an optimum of community resilience at the intersection of economic, social, and environmental capital.<sup>9</sup> Where all these sources of capital are present, resilience is high, where only one or two exist, resilience is weakened. Applying this structure to Ernesettle of the 1950-70s we can see that full employment (economic capital), working-class social/cultural incorporation (social capital), and high-quality neighbourhood spaces (environmental capital) combined to give strength and self-confidence to the local community. Today, by contrast, economic and social capital are especially depleted as a result of loss of work and the cultural marginalization of council estate residents, weakening (although not destroying) the resilience and self-confidence of the Ernesettle community.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, W.M. Adger. 'Social and ecological resilience, are they related?' *Progress in Human Geography*, 2000, vol. 24, no. 3: 347-364; and C. Folke. 'Resilience: the emergence of a perspective for social-ecological system analyses'. *Global Environmental Change*, 2006, vol. 16, no. 3: 253-267.

<sup>8</sup> Geoff Wilson. *Community Resilience and Environmental Transitions*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p.24.

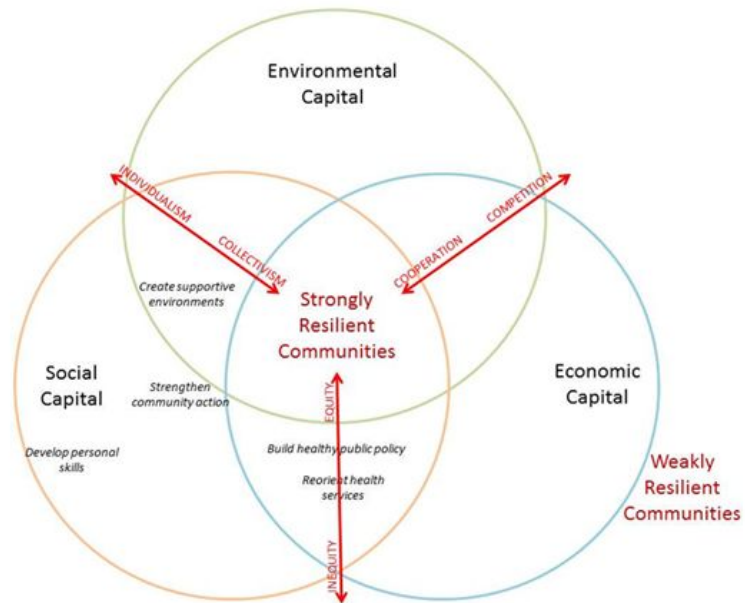


Figure 7.1.

Geoff Wilson's model of community resilience modified by Wendy MAD.<sup>10</sup>

To address these issues in areas of deprivation, it will be necessary to replenish stocks of economic and social capital, and to do so in ways which do not undermine connections to the locality. The contemporary cultural expectations of employment and property mobility do not provide viable solutions to the social issues present in marginalized communities, encouraging as they do a transitory and market-led relationship to home and neighbourhood. Solutions must be sought instead which maintain and strengthen place-based identities, which re-populate residential neighbourhoods at all hours of the day, which re-localize employment, re-socialize risk, and which re-integrate economically marginalized tenants (council or private) into the cultural mainstream. These solutions do not necessarily require a wholesale return to the social government of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, although, in my view, the state has an important facilitating role to play. In this closing section, therefore, I consider in turn elements of the Ernesettle experience that provide signposts towards a better future for social housing, and for community building in general. Intended as preliminary

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<sup>10</sup> Wendy MAD. 'A conceptual model of health promotion based on community resilience: just another pretty picture?'. 2013. Available at: <https://wendymad.wordpress.com/2013/12/06/a-conceptual-model-of-health-promotion-based-on-community-resilience-just-another-pretty-picture/> (accessed 17/03/2016).

thoughts rather than definitive answers, these provide a springboard for future research and testing.

### **Neighbourhood re-population**

Ernesettle's animated street life was an important element in the everyday culture of the neighbourhood, an adjunct to the domestic economy in which household business was transacted across the doorstep. With the domestic economy now serviced by supermarkets, and doorstep transactions largely replaced by direct debits, alternative forms of domesticity are needed to bring residential populations back home. Whilst the shift towards more mobile and flexible attitudes to work observed in chapter 6 has created its own problems, the rise in freelance working patterns could actually positively support this goal. Homeworking has a precedent in the feminine craft economy of the 1950s and 60s, but global communications now amplify the opportunities for home-based earning, which, today, need not be differentiated by gender.

### **Re-localization of work**

Work provided a structuring force in Ernesettle, temporally, spatially and socially, fostering shared experiences 'on the lines', in the daily commute, and in the leisure of high days and holidays. Neighbourhood resilience in the context of today's global marketplace for manufacturing and labour will require at least some element of economic autonomy in the form of secure jobs and income generation locally. The future direction has already been set in Ernesettle, where, in 2014, the local authority supported the creation of a Community Economic Development Trust, handing over land and building resources worth an estimated £3 million to the community to manage as they saw fit.<sup>11</sup> This model of autonomous, community, economic management shares some commonalities with the Transition Towns Network (TTN), an international movement which aims to rebuild community resilience and reduce carbon emissions relocating economies in the process.<sup>12</sup> Whilst the TTN has been subject to criticism for its 'radical ecocentricity', using environmental concerns to shape economic development does address the

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<sup>11</sup> Plymouth City Council. *Community Economic Development Trust*. Available at: <http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/CEDT> (accessed 29/01/2016).

<sup>12</sup> Transition Network. 2013. Available at: <https://www.transitionnetwork.org/about> (accessed 17/03/2016).

fundamental flaws which preclude a revival of the Fordist model of growth enjoyed in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup>

It is evident that the environment cannot sustain economic growth such as was experienced in the *trente glorieuses*, with its reliance on finite resources, its unsustainable expectation of exponential consumer demand, and its consequent pollution. Yet, we can perhaps imagine an era of equivalent growth which is resource neutral: which exploits the massive quantities of waste produced by manufacturers and consumers, and recycles these into something new. As an illustration of this 'urban metabolism', Herbert Giradet uses the example of Cairo, a city of 15 million people which reuses or recycles most of its waste, re-manufacturing metals, plastics, paper, and fabrics into new products, and composting the remaining organic matter.<sup>14</sup> There is a significant challenge in the creation of such industrial ecologies with much further research and investment required, but if government subsidy were invested here rather than in cosmetic face-lifts for so called sink estates then communities might reap much greater benefits in the long-term. The Community Economic Development Trust (CEDT), of which Ernesettle is a part, has made a promising start in this respect, securing investment for a solar array which will provide power and economic returns to the local community in perpetuity.

The CEDT model of local economic autonomy has the advantage of galvanizing support from both sides of the political spectrum, much in the same way as mid-century planning sought to reconcile the interests of capital and labour. For conservatives, the CEDT provides a format for promoting, within a community context, the type of entrepreneurial attitudes advanced by neo-liberalism. Whilst for those on the left, CEDTs allow for the socialization and distribution of the benefits of economic development on an equal basis to local members. Such reconciliations are vital to the political traction enjoyed by community-strengthening measures, and suggest achievable and scalable directions for future policy.

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<sup>13</sup> I. Bailey and G. Wilson. 'Theorising transitional pathways in response to climate change: technocentrism, ecocentrism, and the carbon economy'. *Environment and Planning A*, 2000, vol. 41, issues 10: 2324-2341.

<sup>14</sup> Herbert Giradet. *The Metabolism of Cities*, in S. Wheeler and T. Beatley, *The Sustainable Urban Development Reader*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2009. p.161.

## **Re-socialization of risk and reinvigoration of collective social practices**

The re-socialization of risk is perhaps the most problematic aspect of community resilience because it is much harder to conceive of an effective mechanism for socializing risk within the autonomous geographic confines of a community. Twentieth-century social government distributed risk nationally through the provisions of the NHS, through welfare benefits, and through full employment. Whilst events of accidental misfortune can be ameliorated at a local level (through neighbour contributions to a hardship fund for example) the cost of doing so decreases with scale, meaning that the state is a far more effective and fair provider of such safety nets. At present, the political will does not exist for a return to the 20<sup>th</sup> century model of nationally distributed risk. Indeed, state institutions for the relief of misfortune, such as the NHS and the benefits system, continue to be dismantled. In this context, communities can only do their best with the resources available. Certain forms of risk can be locally re-socialised – CEDT’s might, for example, provide insurance cover for community events – but a satisfactory way forward remains to be seen.

A sense of shared responsibility for the neighbourhood may be easier to recover, subject to the re-localization of work and the re-population of home. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century these factors helped to produce an environment in which children could roam freely under the collective supervision of many adults, fostering the development of strong place-based connections to landscape, buildings, and people. With the recovery of a more coherent shared experience of home, work, and leisure, collective social practices might also revive, helping to build and strengthen local identity in generations to come. Collective social practices rely, in the first instance, on secure social networks, but once these are established the returns are manifold. The Royal Society of Arts’ (RSA) Connected Communities programme highlighted the importance of social relationships, finding that projects which supported the development of strong social networks within communities improved health, employability, and created savings in health and welfare expenditure.<sup>15</sup> Whilst it is

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<sup>15</sup> Royal Society of Arts. *Community Capital and the value of Connected Communities*. 2015. Available at: <https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and->

increasingly possible for people to participate in online communities, face-to-face interactions and geographic proximity remain important aspects of social networks. Structuring these networks around parallel efforts to create local work (whether home-based or otherwise) doubly reinforces their social value and ongoing sustainability.

The ambition to support the formation of social networks can be reinforced by the self-conscious articulation of local heritage. As Geoff Wilson notes, communities do not exist in a vacuum, they 'are embedded in often complex antecedent histories', which can be leveraged as an asset in the quest for local resilience.<sup>16</sup> The RSA's recent examination of the value of heritage endorses this view,<sup>17</sup> arguing that 'heritage provides one of the foundations on which people construct their identity and it shapes the distinctive character of place. [...] More importantly, strong local identity is crucial in revitalizing civic and democratic engagement'.<sup>18</sup> An understanding of the social value of local heritage was central to the mission of the Ernesettle Archive, and the Archive's projects and outputs (Facebook Group, local newsletter, and themed fun days) are easily replicable elsewhere, although, of course, the specific histories which inform local identities will vary enormously between places.

### **Cultural re-integration of the economically marginalized**

Whilst the above are hopeful directions for future community development, which build on the positive lessons to be gleaned from Ernesettle, they do not address all aspects of the destabilization of community that the Ernesettle case study has brought to light. There remains an urgent need to tackle the inferior status of council housing and council house tenants, a status which is inextricably tied into the market for residential property and the associated valorisation of home-ownership. As we saw in chapter 6, growth over the past 40 years in the residential property market, or more accurately, growth in the market for the financial products which sustain it, has transpired to the

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articles/reports/community-capital-the-value-of-connected-communities (accessed 17/03/2016)

<sup>16</sup> Wilson, op cit. p.80.

<sup>17</sup> See *Royal Society of Arts Journal*, Issue 4, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Schifferes. 'Mapping Heritage'. *Royal Society of Arts Journal*, Issue 4, 2015, p.10.

pecuniary benefit of those in the financial sector, and to the detriment of those at the bottom of the social scale.<sup>19</sup> This process continues, especially in the form of Buy-to-Let mortgage products, which generate parallel profits for the banking sector and for private individuals with spare capital, at the cost of housing security for the least well-off. Following Right to Buy, this is as much a problem for council estates as it is for market housing, with millions of ex-council properties now let by Buy to Let landlords to social housing tenants, whose rents are paid by housing benefit. A recent report by Channel 4's *Dispatches* found that an estimated £9 billion a year is paid to private landlords through housing benefit. Dr Victoria Cooper, lecturer in Social Policy at the Open University told the programme that,

approximately 40% of the housing benefit budget is spent on the private rented sector. What we're seeing is a redistribution of wealth and while public funds were previously spent within social housing and then used to reinvest to expand that social housing, this is no longer the case. With the private rented sector the money isn't redistributed and it simply goes into the pockets of private landlords.<sup>20</sup>

As Channel 4's investigation demonstrated, this system degrades the quality of housing paid for by the state, and leaks money that would once have been recycled within the public sector, into private pockets. Rogue landlords use loopholes in the benefits system to provide housing that falls below minimum standards, which cash-strapped local authorities subsequently struggle to police. This housing crisis cannot be resolved by the market. Indeed, market interventions over the past 40 years, such as Right to Buy and the liberalization of mortgage finance, have simply resulted in a polarization of property haves and have nots, in which, increasingly, the former are licensed to exploit the latter. The gap between rich and poor is currently the highest it has been for 40 years and it will continue to widen if the property market is allowed to follow its current course.<sup>21</sup> With private sector rents indexed to property values, house price inflation punishes renters whilst profiting landlords, increasing the social and economic divide. According to Danny Dorling, this social polarization has incubated elitism and prejudice, leading to

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<sup>19</sup> Offer, op cit.

<sup>20</sup> Victoria Cooper, cited in 'Housing Benefit Millionaires': *Dispatches*, 14/03/2016. Press release for 'Housing Benefit Millionaires': *Dispatches* available at: <http://www.channel4.com/info/press/news/housing-benefit-millionaires-channel-4-dispatches> (accessed 17 March 2016).

<sup>21</sup> Daniel Dorling. *Fair Play. A Daniel Dorling Reader on Social Justice*. Bristol: Policy Press, 2012.



a society which finds 'exclusion necessary, prejudice natural, greed good, and despair inevitable'.<sup>22</sup> Such attitudes are starkly exposed and perpetuated in the demonization of council tenants and benefits recipients.

Whilst the property market is not the only mechanism through which rich and poor have become polarized in recent years, it *is* fundamentally implicated in this process. As Ernesettle illustrates, a redistribution of property during the middle years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had profound consequences for social inclusion, operating as a key tool in the social and cultural incorporation of a (formerly) economically marginalized class. On the basis of this evidence, I argue that it should be possible to address social *and* economic exclusion in parallel through housing interventions that provide fairer and more equitable access to decent homes. However, as Dorling argues, the current housing crisis cannot be simply resolved by the construction of more market housing (as the incumbent government propose), because, for many people, even the cheapest property on the market is already out of reach.<sup>23</sup> Whilst economic inequalities persist, 'poorer households [will be] forced to crowd into whatever property they can get, allowing more affluent households to spread themselves out amongst the stock that it left' – a trend that is already evident in the widespread ownership, by those who can afford them, of second homes and holiday homes.<sup>24</sup> These observations endorse the view, widely held from the 1930s to the 1960s, that the free market is not the most effective provider of housing.

Ernesettle shows us that communities can and will flourish in housing provided by the state, as long as work and leisure are also present to provide complementary channels of shared experience. The combined benefits of equal access to high quality housing, a regenerated, resource-neutral local economy, the re-socialisation of risk, and the re-population of the home, will jointly help to foster the kind of coherent communities exemplified by Ernesettle in its heyday. If implemented at scale, these measures could pave the way to a fairer, more equitable society. The neighbourhood concept is not new, and its post-war iteration was in many ways flawed, but, with appropriate

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.86.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Dorling. *All that is Solid*. London: Penguin, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.101.

modifications, it can be renewed, providing a hopeful model for sustainable, egalitarian, and thriving communities of the future.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Project information sheet and interview consent form

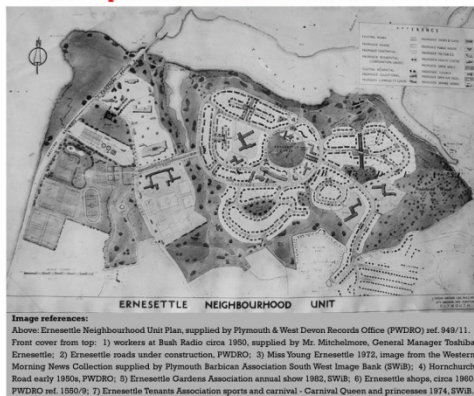
**CONTACT DETAILS**

**For information about the Ernesettle Archive project:**  
**Researchers: Hilary Phillips and Rob Fraser**  
Email: [ernesettlearchive@hotmail.com](mailto:ernesettlearchive@hotmail.com)  
Telephone: 07513 727 580 (please leave a message, we will call you back)  
Facebook Group: Ernesettle Archive

**For information about the researchers/validation of identity:**  
Research Supervisor: Fiona Hackney, University College Falmouth  
Email: [fiona.hackney@falmouth.ac.uk](mailto:fiona.hackney@falmouth.ac.uk) Telephone: 01326 213 834

**For information about participants' rights:**  
Research Support Office, University of the Arts, London  
Telephone: 020 7514 6262

**Thank you for your interest.**  
**Please keep this information sheet for future reference.**



#### Why Ernesettle?

Ernesettle is a unique and special place. Completed in 1953 as part of The Plan for Plymouth (Plymouth's programme of post-war reconstruction), it is one of the best preserved post-war suburbs built in the late 1940s to provide new homes for people from overcrowded and bomb-damaged areas.

Suburban housing was an important part of the Plan for Plymouth, but it is not well researched or documented. The Ernesettle Archive aims to fill this gap in Plymouth's history by inviting people who experienced the early years of Ernesettle to tell their stories.

#### What can I do to participate?

If you would like to tell us your story, you can join a one-to-one or a group memory session. At these sessions Hilary Phillips and/or Rob Fraser will ask questions and show photos to bring back memories of Ernesettle for discussion. An audio recording of your answers will be made to preserve your memories for posterity.

Memory meetings will be arranged to take place in comfortable and familiar surroundings, for example they could take place in your home, or could be arranged to take the form of a walking tour of Ernesettle. You are welcome to contribute just once or many times if you wish.

You can also share your old photos with the Archive, either by uploading them to our Facebook group page, or by lending them to us to scan and save as part of the digital archive.

#### What will happen to the results of the project?

Many people are fascinated by their local history so we're using a newsletter to bring Ernesettle stories to everyone who lives there. Throughout the project, the memories, photos, and information gathered will be made public in the Ernesettle Archive Newsletter which is delivered to 1500 homes locally. If you no longer live in Ernesettle, you can join our Newsletter mailing list (see back page for contact details).

## Ernesettle Archive

### PROJECT INFORMATION

**Introducing the Ernesettle Archive:** a project dedicated to researching and recording stories of local life. The project is organised by Hilary Phillips, a research student at University College Falmouth, and Rob Fraser, a freelance photographer and boyhood resident of Ernesettle.

Together Hilary and Rob are talking to local people to record their Ernesettle stories; collecting an archive of old photos of the estate; and taking photos of Ernesettle in the present day. These stories and pictures are being published in the quarterly Ernesettle Archive Newsletter.

#### Can you help?

We're looking for former and current Ernesettle residents to tell us about local life in the estate's early years. What was it like living in a brand new house? Did you or your family work locally? What were the highlights of an Ernesettle childhood? What were the problems of living there?

Everyone has an opinion and a story to tell, and your Ernesettle stories are a valuable part of our local history.

To find out more about how to participate - pto...



If you participate in a recorded memory session, your memories may also be quoted as follows: on Facebook; in a podcast (an audio broadcast available on the internet); in Hilary Phillips's research thesis; and in an exhibition of Ernesettle history. At the end of the project, our audio recordings will be offered to Plymouth & West Devon Records Office, and may be used for future research.

#### Ernesettle Archive Online

Initially we're making use of free internet sites rather than setting up our own dedicated website. You can join our Ernesettle Archive Facebook Group to post photos or memories and get status updates on Newsletter issues.

#### Will my contribution be confidential?

This is not a confidential project so highlights of your memories may be made public in various ways described above. If you wish to take part, you will be asked to give your consent for the recording, storage and publication of your memories by signing a consent form. If you would like to take part but would prefer not to be named, please tell Hilary Phillips or Rob Fraser, they will ensure that your contribution is marked 'anonymous'.

#### Who is funding the research?

Hilary Phillips has received a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to undertake this research project. Further funding is being sought to cover the cost of producing the newsletter and making audio recordings.

#### Further information

Before you decide to participate it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information sheet carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

If you have any concerns or questions about the project you can discuss these with Hilary Phillips, or you can contact the Research Support Office at the University of the Arts for independent advice about your rights. Contact details are provided at the end of this information sheet.

## Participant Consent Form - Ernesettle Archive Research Project

### 1. Invitation Paragraph

You are being invited to take part in research into the history of Ernesettle in its early years. Before you decide to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.

### 2. Activity Consents

I understand that I have given my consent for the following to take place (tick as appropriate):

- To take part in a recorded group discussion about Ernesettle in its early years.*
- To take part in a recorded walking interview around Ernesettle.*
- To have my photograph taken in or outside my home.*
- To contribute my own photographs for reproduction.*

### 3. Data Consents

I understand that I have given my consent for the inclusion/use of recorded, transcribed and photographic material gained as a result of the above in the following:

- *The Ernesettle Archive newsletter*
- *An Ernesettle Archive website / Facebook page*
- *A podcast – an audio recording broadcast on the internet*
- *An exhibition about the history of Ernesettle.*
- *A thesis written by Hilary Kolinsky.*
- *An archive held at the PWDRO which may be used for future research, exhibition and publication.*

I understand that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed for information which I might disclose in group interviews.

### 4. Statements of Understanding

- I have read the information leaflet about the research project which I have been asked to take part in and have been given a copy of this information leaflet to keep.
- What is going to happen and why it is being done has been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions.

### 5. Right of withdrawal

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the programme at any time without disadvantage to myself and without having to give any reason.

### 6. Statement of Consent

I hereby fully and freely consent to participation in the study which has been fully explained to me.

### 7. Signatures

Participant's name 1 (BLOCK CAPITALS):

---

Participant's signature 1:

---

Participant's name 2 (BLOCK CAPITALS):

---

Participant's signature 2:

---

Principal student investigator's signature:

---

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## 9. Basic Participant Information

### Participant 1

Date of Birth:

---

Street/s lived in  
Ernesettle:

---

### Participant 2

Date of Birth:

---

Street/s lived in  
Ernesettle:

---

## 10. Contacts

- A. Researchers: Hilary Kolinsky & Rob Fraser  
Email: [ernesettlearchive@hotmail.com](mailto:ernesettlearchive@hotmail.com), Telephone: 07513 727 580
- B. Research Supervisor: Fiona Hackney, University College Falmouth  
Email: [fiona.hackney@falmouth.ac.uk](mailto:fiona.hackney@falmouth.ac.uk), Telephone: 01326 213834
- C. Research Support Office, University of the Arts London  
Telephone: 020 7514 6262

## 10. Participant's Record

A duplicate copy of the signed consent form will be given provided for your own record

## Appendix 2

### Participant data

No.	First Name	Surname	Year of Birth	Age at interview	Gender	No. children / siblings	Lived in Emsettles		Streets lived in			Lived before Emsettles	Formed?
							Start	End	1	2	3		
1	Geoff	Ashen	1928	86	Male	4	1925	n/a	The Green		Princes Rock then prebun at Tamerton Felst	NOT KNOWN	
2	Nrs	Ashen	1930	84	Female	4	1925	n/a	The Green		Princes Rock then prebun at Tamerton Felst	NOT KNOWN	
3	Rajar	Beck	1948	63	Male	0	1950	1978	Croydon		HITTON Place, Millbridge, Plymouth	Y	
4	Sheila	Brenning nee O'By	1945	66	Female	3	1949	1985	Lymple		Age 4 when arrived from St Judes	Y	
5	Jan	Dalby nee Harrison	1945	65	Female	3	1949	1967	Hornchurch	Rushill	n/a born in Devonport	NOT KNOWN	
6	Kathy	Deana	1950	63	Female	3	1950	1978	Lakeside		Born Emsettles	Y	
7	Rob	Frewer	1964	43	Male	5	1964	not known	Lakeside		Princes Rock	N	
8	Edgar	Frost	1948	64	Male	not known	1948	not known	Lakeside		not known	NOT KNOWN	
9	Leshy	Gamberton	not known	not known	Female	not known	1959	n/a	Biggin Hill		St Budaux then Southway	Y	
10	Mike	Gamberton	not known	not known	Female	not known	1959	n/a	Biggin Hill		St Budaux then Southway	Y	
11	Dave	Grest	1945	66	Male	3	1948	n/a	Rochford	Hornchurch	n/a moved in aged 3	NOT KNOWN	
12	Bill	Hill	1948	64	Male	not known	1948	not known	Lakeside		not known	NOT KNOWN	
13	John	Jacobowski	1948	68	Male	2	1952	1959	North Wood		not known	NOT KNOWN	
14	Sandra	Kowalewski	not known	not known	Female	2	1950?	n/a	Hawkings	Nufford	Born Emsettles	NOT KNOWN	
15	Marilyn	Lacomba	1957	53	Female	7	1960	1988	Kerley		Born Emsettles	Y	
16	Pat	Lacomba	1933	77	Female	7	1960	n/a	Kerley	Tangmere	Swilly	Y	
17	Yvonne	Lacomba	1960	50	Female	7	1960	n/a	Kerley		Born Emsettles	Y	
18	Bob	Michelnorc	1957	52	Male	not known	1957	1975	Hornchurch		Born Emsettles	NOT KNOWN	
19	Bella	Murphy	1925	85	Female	5	1950	n/a	Croydon	Hawkinge	1 bed flat Kensington Terr Headford Park, Plymouth	Y	
20	Dennis	Murphy	1945	68	Male	5	1950	1978	Croydon	Hawkinge	Headford Park, Plymouth	Y	
21	Pete	Murphy	1949	64	Male	5	1950	1978	Croydon	Hawkinge	Headford Park, Plymouth	Y	
22	Graham	Nicholas	1943	64	Male	1	1949	n/a	Rochford	Northward	Aged 6 when arrived from Stoke, Plymouth	Y	
23	Ron (Noddy)	Phillips	1955	56	Male	2	1955?	n/a	Lakeside		n/a	NOT KNOWN	
24	Pat	Port nee White	1946	64	Female	5	1950	1985	Hornchurch	W. Milling	Devonport, moved aged 10	NOT KNOWN	
25	Lugh	Reinick	not known	not known	Female	not known	not known	n/a	Ubridge		not known	NOT KNOWN	
26	Allan	Sargent	1947	65	Female	2	1948	n/a	W. Milling	Lakeside	1 bed flat in Victoria Place, Stoke	Y	
27	Charles	Sells	1932	80	Male	3	1950	n/a	Narnton	Biggin Hill	Aged 18 when arrived from 21 Prince St Devonport	Y	
28	Bernice	Synale	1927	83	Female	4	1949	n/a	Tongrent		South East	Y	
29	Pat	Stony	1948	65	Female	2	1950	1965	West Halling		Union Street	NOT KNOWN	
30	Andy	Stork	1941	72	Male	4	1947	1973	Biggin Hill		Flat in St Budaux	NOT KNOWN	
31	Gloria	Torne nee Dodard	1944	67	Female	1	1949	1988	Lymple	Biggin Hill	Aged 5 when arrived from Hornchurch nsp-habs	Y	
32	Clare	Train	1921	89	Female	2	1948	n/a	W. Milling	Lakeside	House built by father + 1+1-acre plot, Plymouth	Y	
33	Bill	Ward	1931	82	Male	1	1954	n/a	Acillington Place		Athensum Street, The Hoe	N	
34	Judie	Ward	1956	57	Female	3	-	1976	Hornchurch		n/a	NOT KNOWN	
35	Malcolm	Ward	1954	59	Male	3	1954	1978	Acillington Place		Athensum Street, The Hoe	N	
36	Barbara	Webster	1932	80	Female	not known	1949	n/a	Lakeside		Aged 18 when arrived from Clifton Terrace, Green Y	Y	
37	Gwen	Wingard	not known	not known	Female	3	1968	n/a	Hornchurch	Northolt	Crownhill, Plymouth	N	



## Appendix 3

Selected participant portraits. Photographs courtesy of Rob Fraser



Charlie Sells



Beta Murphy



Roger Beck



Alison Train



Gwen Wengradt



Jean Darlby (with Fire crew at the Ernesettle Show)



Dave Greet



The RAF Ernesettle crew

Left to right: Wendy Griffiths, Verena Love, Alison Train, Hilary Kolinsky,  
Gwen Wengradt, Billie Lee-Love



## Appendix 4

### Sample newsletters

# Up The Creek

Spring 2010 **Newsletter of the Ernesettle Archive**

**WELCOME to the first Newsletter of the Ernesettle Archive - a newsheet dedicated to your local history.** From the pioneering first residents in 1948, through the early years of the 50s and 60s, right up to the Ernesettle of today, the Archive is researching and publishing a social history of the area. This quarterly newsletter contains highlights of the story so far: the highs and lows, the drama and surprises of daily life - at home, at work, at school and at play. In our first issue we are starting out small, but over time these pages will fill with local stories and the newsletter will grow. We hope you enjoy it and we look forward to hearing your tales of Ernesettle life...

**Advertise Here**  
Promote your services direct to 1500 households in Ernesettle

- Competitive rates
- Free design service
- Call us for details  
(contact details back page)

## 1948: "WE WALKED THE PLANK INTO OUR NEW HOME"

With no pavements, no street lights, and houses being built all around them, this was the experience of the first families to arrive in Ernesettle in 1948. Bringing all their worldly goods on the improvised transport of a coal lorry or borrowed van, they unloaded possessions in the street and stepped across the wooden planks which bridged the muddy ground between road and front door. This was the start a new life in the green and spacious surroundings of Ernesettle.

...continued page 2



Ernesettle under construction. Image supplied by Plymouth & West Devon Records Office (PW DRO) ref: 15509

**In this issue:**

- "Mud everywhere!" Ernesettle under construction. Page 2
- Ernesettle before the estate: a history of Budshead Mill. Page 3
- Limited edition City Architect's Ernesettle estate plan! Centrefold.
- Battle of Britain: Ernesettle street names explained. Page 3

Supported by: Plymouth Library service, Plymouth and West Devon Records Office, South West Image Bank, University College Falmouth and the University of Plymouth.

# Up The Creek

Autumn 2010

**Newsletter of the Ernesettle Archive**

**Welcome to the second Newsletter of the Ernesettle Archive - a newsheet dedicated to your local history.**

From the pioneering first residents in 1949, through the early years of the 50s and 60s, right up to the Ernesettle of today, the Archive is researching and publishing a social history of the area. It's a fascinating history, filled with the highs and lows, the drama and surprises of daily life: at home, at work, at school and at play. This quarterly newsletter contains highlights of the story so far. In this issue we're celebrating Ernesettle's working lives, and reporting on the recent RAF Ernesettle summer jamboree, an event inspired by our Battle of Britain street names.

## Advertise Here

Promote your services direct to 1800 households in Ernesettle

- Competitive rates
- Free design service
- Call us for details (contact details back page)

## 1949: LOCAL PRODUCTION LINE SWINGS INTO ACTION



Bush Radio (now Toshiba) opened its doors in 1949 following a ceremony attended by movie mogul J. Aruthur Rank and Lady Nancy Astor. The factory on Northolt Avenue, Ernesettle always produced the best in

entertainment technology, starting with 'wireless' sets in the 1940s, introducing black and white, then colour televisions in the 1950s and 60s, and ultimately producing flat screen TVs until 2009. [continued page 2]

### Contents:

p2 Bush memories  
p3 Ernesettle Lives: Angela Gumbleton  
p4-7 RAF Ernesettle Summer Jamboree

p8 2010 Current News  
p9 Ernesettle Lives: Clare Train  
p10-11 Street names: Hornchurch Road  
p12 Sport - Cycle Speedway

Supported by: PWDRO, SWIB, Plymouth Library service, University College Falmouth & the University of Plymouth

# We Did It! Residents Action Force rally troops for summer jamboree

Thanks to everyone who attended or took part in the RAF Ernesettle Summer Jamboree on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2010.

Back in May we put a leaflet featuring Rosie Riveter and a wartime rallying cry of 'We Can Do It!' through every letterbox in Ernesettle. Inspired by the unique connection between Ernesettle and the Battle of Britain, which commemorated its 70th anniversary this summer, we set out to stage a 1940s themed jamboree on Ernesettle Green.

That 'Call to Arms' leaflet brought forward a team of volunteers, all keen to pitch in and do their bit. They formed the core of the Residents Action Force (RAF Ernesettle), and with their help, ideas and contacts, the Jamboree was organised in record time and

on a tight budget.

Invaluable support was provided by the Budshead Trust and local business supporters (see opposite). In the spirit of wartime 'make do and mend' we begged or borrowed tents, staging, a PA system, and catering equipment, and the RAF crew rolled their sleeves up and worked as a team to set them up on the Green.

The day kicked off with a dog show at 10am. Cadets from the Air Training Corps led a parade of Scouts, Majorettes and Ernesettle Playcare children past the Lord Mayor before the official opening at midday.

Games, stalls and refreshments were available all day, with wartime themed food



provided in the canteen which was expertly run by volunteers.

The reigning Carnival Queen presided over a lucky programme draw to award some excellent prizes generously donated by local businesses. The top prize of a night at the Astor Hotel executive suite was won by Mr Lee of Hill Path; Mrs Evans of Rochford Crescent was the lucky winner of £50 Tesco vouchers; and many other lucky locals won tickets for family days out, toys, games and sporting events.

The highlight of the afternoon was a display by the RAF Ernesettle Red Barrows, who entertained the crowds with their winged barrows formation display complete with air raid sirens and smoke.

PTO for photos from the event. More pictures on the Ernesettle Archive Facebook Group.



# Up The Creek

Winter 2011 **Newsletter of the Ernesettle Archive**

*WELCOME to the third newsletter of the Ernesettle Archive - a newsheet dedicated to your local history.* From the pioneering first residents in 1949, through the early years of the 50s and 60s, right up to the Ernesettle of today, the Archive is researching and publishing a social history of the area. It's a fascinating history, filled with the highs and lows, the drama and surprises of daily life: at home, at work, at school and at play. This issue is dedicated to our gardens which from the 1950s have been the pride and joy of Ernesettle. Start digging yours now in preparation for the Ernesettle Show 2011.

**Advertise Here**  
Promote your services direct to  
Ernesettle residents  
• Competitive rates  
• Free design service  
• Call us for details  
(contact details back page)

**GARDENS SPECIAL**

## 1982: WE KNEW OUR ONIONS

Ernesettle, with its green vistas and sheltered Tamar Valley climate has always been the perfect location for keen gardeners. To reward their efforts, the Tenants and Gardens Associations ran an annual show well into the 1980s. Vegetable gardening was especially popular in the austerity years of the early 1950s. Aerial photos of Ernesettle show many of the back gardens laid out in neat rows of vegetables, and older residents recall the days when 'father' (and sometimes 'mother' too) dedicated every weekend to digging, sowing and harvesting food for the family. [continued page 2]



**Contents:**  
p2 Gardens in Ernesettle  
p2 Croydon Gardens - RAF Street names  
p3 Budshead Manor Orchard

p4 Ernesettle 2011 Summer Show  
p5 1961 Tenants Handbook Gardening Tips  
p6-7 2011 Current News  
p8 Sport: Tug-o-War Team

With thanks to: PWDRO, SWiB, Plymouth Library service, University College Falmouth & the University of Plymouth

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### Gardens cover story; continued pg1

Local tenants formed Gardening Associations to share tools, expertise and support each other in their efforts, and annual competitions rewarded the best gardeners. Friendly rivalry existed between Ernesettle and the other the new estates (Whitleigh, Ham, Honicknowle, Efford, Pennycross and Southway) with winners of the *Best Kept Garden* title in each area competing for a *Best of Plymouth Trophy*.

In honour of this great local tradition the Ernesettle Show will be revived in summer 2011 as an open competition for locals to show off their garden and home produce. Find out how you can join in on page 4-5.

Cover Photo: 'Know your onions' Gardens Association Judges assess competition entries at the 1982 Show (St Aidan's Church Hall). Image from the WMN Collection supplied by Plymouth Barbican Assoc. SWiB



**Ernesettle's Battle of Britain Street names**  
No. 2 in our series of articles looking at the history behind the names of our local streets.

#### Croydon Aerodrome / RAF Croydon

The airfield at Croydon played a key role in British aviation history. It began life in 1915 as one of London's strategic defence posts to ward off German Zeppelins attacks. A suburb eight miles south of the capital, Croydon was perfectly placed to serve this purpose. Initially home to just two planes, the airfield slowly took shape with an increase of Training Squadrons, brick buildings and personnel.

Two Royal Princes (Albert, later King George VI, and his elder brother the Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII) won their RAF wings at Croydon. In 1919 Winston Churchill crashed at Croydon, which was gaining a reputation as 'more of a club' than a serious airfield. The RAF left in 1920 and the airfield returned to civil aviation.

When war ended people flocked to the adjacent Aircraft Disposal Company to buy smashed parts from the thousands of damaged planes arriving by the trainload from France. Propellers made good hat-stands and clock cases, steel tubes as bedsteads and wings sold off as roofs for chicken runs – unfortunately the chickens ate paint from the wings and died.



Photo: 1954 Co-op Collection supplied by Plymouth Barbican Association SWiB. (NB. note the neat rows of vegetable plots visible in many back gardens).

Croydon Aerodrome quickly became the main London terminal. Commercial airlines began to move in. KLM made the first Amsterdam-Croydon flight. There were regular flights to Paris, as well as survey flights to Delhi in India, and Cape Town in South Africa. Soon Imperial Airlines were linking the world to Croydon.

[continued page 6]

Appendix 5

Ernesettle Archive event photographs. Photographs courtesy of Rob Fraser  
2011





2013





2014



2015





