THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

Article 6 : SCHOOL HOLIDAYS REMEMBERED
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The children have now returned to their classrooms after the long summer holidays (much to the relief of many parents!) and I realised how quiet the streets were during that time, they resembled something like the Marie Celeste or even something like a scene from Chitty Chitty Bang Bang with the child catcher searching empty streets looking for the children. Where were they all hiding? What were they doing?

I remember being a child of the 60s being out nearly all the time in the summer holidays having all day to do anything and everything as long as it was free! Our parents had very little spare money in those days so we didn't have holidays away. We didn't mind as everybody was in the same boat, we still had fun. Most pavements were covered in hopscotches and noughts and crosses — we were supposed to wash it away at the end of the day but never bothered as we needed them for the next day. 4 yards of knicker elastic provided us with the necessary equipment for Chinese skipping. The boys had their footballs to kick around, usually on the street and sometimes not for long as our neighbours had a rule that if the ball came into their gardens three times on the third the ball was confiscated until our dads got home from work and the said ball was handed back to them. Our garden shed was cleared out and swept clean once a year whether it needed it or not so we could have a den to go to on a wet day, us girls never managed to keep it for long as big brothers always over-ruled us. When we did have the chance to get in it we would make up strange codes which we usually forgot how to read but who cared, we enjoyed doing them.



One of my favourite things I enjoyed was sliding down St. James's Hill on cardboard! Sheer bliss until you hit a rabbit hole. We all would take some sandwiches and a drink and go out for much of the day over Mousehold Heath, making dens and sliding down the hills and getting rather mucky in the process. We never had a watch but we knew when it was teatime. Thorpe Hamlet used to have lots of haunted houses, well to us they were, any empty houses were fair game to us, daring each other to go inside them or in the gardens.

Opposite Wickham's yard on Wolfe Road was the ruins of an old house and the garden was really overgrown with trees and bushes and the older kids used to love jumping out at us just to scare us silly. The corner shop — now the One Stop -- used to be owned by a Mr Arthurton and he sold penny and tuppenny ice totties from a side window, you had to ring a bell at the side of the window and wait to be served — sometimes he would sell bags of gooseberries for sixpence, I can't ever remember buying a bag with any sweet ones in it!

When I think of some of the things we done it's hard to think how we fitted it all in six weeks but I do know how our parents felt when it came to going back to school as I felt the same when my children returned after their summer holidays although my children were not impressed when I had to show them the joys of cardboard skiing down St. James's Hill!