

How much has Leeman Road changed over time?

Val Turbet, who has been the lollipop lady for 45 years



Image: V Turbett

When did you move here?

1970, when I got married.

What was it like?

People thought it was rough but you could leave your door unlocked.

We still have streets of terraced houses. How have the houses changed?

When I moved here, not all of the houses had bathrooms. They either had a tin bath on the floor in front of the fire or used the slipper baths next to where the vet's is now. You had to pay to go in, women on one side and men on the other. You went into a changing cubicle then washed yourself in the bath.

We didn't have a washing machine in the house. We had to take our washing to the laundrette.

There are lots more flats here now. There used to be more shops but they have been turned into flats. My house used to be the chemist. They mixed the medicines in the cellar. Then it was a ladies' hairdresser, then a greengrocer. When it flooded, the counters fell through the floor. It was then turned into a house.

What shops were there?

There were lots of shops, just about on every corner.

There was the Co-op that sold all sorts of things. There was a Post Office, Stan's newspaper shop, a laundrette, a barbers, a junk shop, a fruit and veg shop and a couple of fish and chips shops.

There was a dairy and also a piggery and slaughterhouse down on Garnett Terrace.

There was even a doctor next to the Church Hall. If you wanted an appointment you just put a note through the door in the morning and he would come and visit you.

Are there any other ways in which the area has changed?

It used to flood. In 1978 the water was up to my waist in the house. I had a young baby and we had to be taken out of the house by the army. We walked to my mother-in-law's house in Osbaldwick with the big pram, the dog and our belongings.

We used to know all our neighbours. I don't know them any more. Some of the houses are now holiday lets.

The number 7 bus used to do a loop from town to Kingsland Terrace and back.

There wasn't a path along the riverside then, just a muddy track. It was farmland along there with sheep and cows grazing.

There was a Working Men's Club where the houses on Stephenson Way are now.

There were areas of waste ground and garages where houses had been destroyed by bombs in the WWII. There are now flats built there.

There wasn't a bridge across the river until Clifton Bridge was built in the 1960s.

There's lots more traffic now.

What would be the same if your younger self could visit?

I don't think I would recognise much. Along Leeman Road it used to be the Phoenix Engineering works, factories and railway works. Now it is all flats and houses.

On Kingsland Terrace there was a big wall. Cars often used to crash into it.

Behind it was the railway cleaning depot for washing the railway carriages.



Floods in 1978



People being evacuated by the army in 1978



March 1980: A skeleton is all that remains of the 50-year-old carriage cleaning depot in Kingsland Terrace, which was being replaced by a new cleaning depot