

41 Green End Street

Just as we felt we were getting things sorted in Cross Street, John's job took us to the mainland. Civil service pay was unimpressive but the moving benefits were good. All our removal expenses were paid, there was an allowance for curtains and carpets and the interest was paid on any increase in mortgage for five years. After that, a percentage of the interest was paid, decreasing by 20% each year, so after ten years we would be on our own. They also paid a bridging loan for a year, which was just as well as this was how long it took to sell Cross Street. We finally sold it for £18,750. It did allow us to move up the property ladder, with the aid of a £15,000 mortgage. The new property cost £31,000. The mortgage interest rates were at the time between 13% and 15%.



**41 Green End Street
with a visiting car**

The posting was to Aylesbury and without a car we concentrated on looking at properties in the town centre to begin with. We viewed half a dozen houses, although John had ruled out some on his own before I came up with Rebecca, aged one month, for the viewing visit. There was one that warranted a second visit on the main road, another older property that was opposite a school, one or perhaps two modern houses on Bedgrove Estate, one that backed on to the wall of the local prison and one that seemed to have been built on a flood plain. At the last minute, John's colleague offered to drive us to a viewing out of town. We settled on 41 Green End Street, Aston Clinton. The road name always reminded me of something out of Enid Blyton. After we left Aylesbury, I discovered that my great great grandmother had lived in the same road, so maybe some genetic memory was at work in our choice.

We moved in on the 1st of October 1982. It was the day before John's birthday but I don't remember the birthday and the move being in such close proximity. 41 was a 1930s' semi, one of my favourite styles and like others of my house purchases, different from the norm. 41 had an enormous loft extension, giving us three floors of accommodation. The metal-framed windows had secondary double glazing, which basically seemed to provide a home for bluebottles. We arrived the evening before the removal van, complete with Rebecca in her carry cot. The removal men had been very impressed with her as she sat in her bouncy chair at Cross Street. I remember them commenting that, at five months old, she could already hold her own orange trainer cup. That first night we slept in sleeping bags on the floor in the back bedroom, with Rebecca in her carry cot aka the top of her pram.

Here there was a much larger front garden, with a driveway, handy for the car we didn't have. The back garden was bigger too, with what appeared to be a garage at the end. Legally we weren't supposed to put a car in this as there was no vehicular access up the back lane but this didn't matter to us. My pervading memory of the back lane was of pulling up handfuls of cleavers, known in the family as 'sticky weed'. I also remember



Mum and Rebecca on the Settee 1983

the garden as the venue for a Teddy Bear's Picnic birthday party for Rebecca,

There was an open porch and a tiny, square hallway with the stairs on the left and a door to the living room on the right. The living room had been knocked through to what had been the dining room. The living room end had a bay window and a large, stone 1970s' fireplace, with a gas fire and back boiler for the gas central heating. The three-piece suite and some bookcases went in this end. The settee was in the bay window. When we first moved in, we put all the

unpacked boxes (mostly of books) in the bay with the settee in front. Initially, the settee was halfway across the room but as we unpacked, it gradually it moved a little further back each day. The day before we were going on holiday Rebecca, aged about sixteen months, fell backwards over the back of the settee and cut her head on the radiator behind - butterfly stitches required. I used to stand at the window, holding a baby Rebecca, chanting 'come on daddy', when it was time for him to come home from work.

In the dining end we put the dresser, the desk and dining table. We got our first proper set of china and cutlery from a mail-order catalogue. It was 'free' as our first order offer. The pattern was beige with trees on; I still have some. The plates were displayed on the dresser. I never used the cups and saucers. In fact I never use cups and saucers at all, mugs being much better for cuddling. When Rebecca got a toy tea-set she didn't recognise the saucers and thought that they were small plates. The left-hand, dining room end alcove had a built-in full height cupboard that was very useful for games and craft things. Bookshelves were added wherever we could find space. When Rebecca started to pull books off the shelves as a toddler, I put hardboard in front of the lower shelves. One bookcase near the kitchen door was used for toys, most of which were stored in labelled 4 litre plastic ice cream boxes. There were more toys in a red plastic trolley with three drawers that was supposed to be a vegetable rack. We decorated this double room in a greenish hessian-textured wallpaper but unfortunately ran out before we had quite finished. Rather than go to the expense of buying another roll we just left out the bit behind the dresser. This worked fine until we moved out! We had a small, black and white portable television erected on a high bracket. I only went over to a colour television when black and white ones were no longer available, as the black and white licence fee was so much cheaper.

The small kitchen had grey formica units when we moved in. When dismantling these we inadvertently dismantled a unit that was still full of glass, with disastrous results. The new kitchen that we put in had dark brown worktops and textured brown doors. We put cork tiles on the floor. The new sink was called Francke, which amused us and there was a brown tray that fitted over the sink to make an extra surface. The sink was under the window, looking out on to the back garden. Rebecca used to sit on the worktop while I washed nappies. I always wondered why my minimal housework took so much longer than everyone else's but it was because we still lagged behind the

norm as regards labour saving devices, such as automatic washing machines! I was very safety conscious, so all the plug sockets had covers, the fridge and kitchen cupboards all had child locks and the cooker had a cooker guard. This always seemed easier than ensuring 100% vigilance. In fact, Rebecca screamed if she was left alone in a room, so she wasn't ever by herself in this house, except when she was asleep and often not even then.

Upstairs in the bathroom we had an avocado bathroom suite put in, the height of fashion at the time. There was no separate toilet. To make room for the stairs to the loft extension, what had been a bedroom was now an enormous landing containing an eight foot wide airing cupboard with sliding doors and still room for my wooden bathroom cupboard. Stairs behind another sliding door led to the loft room that extended over the whole of the house. This left us with only the eaves as a 'loft', so this room was used for the spare bed and anything else that we couldn't fit in to other parts of the house. The model railway was kept here, on a board that was held off the ground by low bookcases.

The two bedrooms below were both a reasonable size. Rebecca slept in the slightly smaller front bedroom. Her cot was in the back right corner away from the door and window. This was replaced by a white, flat pack cabin bed in the back left corner when she started to climb out of the cot. My bedroom unit didn't fit in this house so the dressing table section was stored on the top floor and the wardrobes were put in the alcoves either side of the chimney breast in the back bedroom where we slept.