

The Northway and Brownswall estates

By Tony Steventon



The Northway in its early phase of development in the late 1960s, with Leek's Farm (Hickmerelands) in the foreground.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s I spent all my holidays between the ages of 5 and 12 at Leek's farm (Hickmerelands) by what is now the Northway. It was farmed by Bert Leek in those days – he rented it off Jack Darby. Leek owned around 40 cows and a bull; he had two nice orchards and used his land for mixed arable purposes, including potatoes.

I loved the shire horses there - he had four beautiful horses and didn't use tractors. One of them, a grey shire horse, was bought from Bilston steel works when they began to scale down their operations.

Most of the farmland was later sold for building houses and all that's left of the old farm is the farm buildings on Kinsell Bank. The Wooldridges who owned Sedgley Hall Farm bought and moved into Bert Leek's house in the mid-60s.

I left school at 15 and worked first for Gibbons in Lower Gornal, then for a local garage. When I first joined the building trade I was a glazier for two years, then I spent the rest of my working life as a plasterer. From the age of 19 I worked for Joe Webb on the Brownswall Estate and later on his Northway development in the late 60s and early 70s.

Joe Webb's builders' business was based in Ivyhouse Lane in Coseley. He was responsible for building the Brownswall Estate and part of the Northway. The original developer Orvill went bust and the development was continued by Webbs, as well as Five Oaks and Bryants.