1. Hawksmoor Road.

In 1960 we moved to a 647 square feet council flat, 58 Hawksmoor Road in North Oxford. We lived on the second floor of a three story building. The flat had verandas, one overlooking the nearby Northern by-pass to the front and the other, a field to the rear. This move changed my life. North Oxford was the favored area of University academics and their families. The pupils at the local Cutteslowe Primary School were approximately 50% the children of these academics and 50% from the local council housing estate. When the latter was built it caused a war. Residents of the genteel roads next to the estate had two walls built in 1934, designed to keep the council house tenants away from their houses that were now sandwiched between the council estate and the Banbury Road. The walls were 9' tall and capped by spikes. Eventually the walls were demolished in 1959 after much strife. When I moved there, in 1960, feelings were still raw and there was a pervasive air of "us" and "them," which could be detected in the school. For example, one of my teachers, Mrs. Jones, would seat the class according to their scores on various tests. One day she asked everyone whose father (this was 1964), worked at the University to raise their hands. The preponderance of hands was amongst



View from balcony overlooking Northern Bypass in winter of 1963



Wall being built in 1934



View taken in 2019

the brighter kids in the front. She surveyed the response and said, hmm, yes.

I befriended boys from both groups, however my closest friends were from the gown and not the town side. And so I visited their houses. They were huge, filled with books and light, a sharp contrast to our small flat. It was against this milieu that I measured myself and, to my eternal shame, came to be embarrassed that my home was a cramped council flat, that my dad worked at the car factory and that my mother cleaned hotels.



My mother and me, aged 5 in Cutteslowe Park

In 1965 I took the Eleven Plus exam. It was primarily an intelligence test. The content had been altered since its inception in 1944 to remove questions relating to family servants and classical music, as it was realized that these favored middle class over working class children! Never the less, the majority who passed were from the middle class and thus had the chance to attend a grammar school and so were set on the road to a white collar job and all that goes with that. The pressure was enormous and parents made sure their children knew that the exam was a be all and end all. I managed to pass and went to a grammar school in

1965. Thus was my life changed for ever, by a worthless, class-riddled intelligence test.