

## FROM COTTERIDGE TO BOURNBROOK ON THE 45 BUS (AREA 4)

### BARRY WHITEHEAD

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Well, my intention today was to do my first path for the project, but alas the weather had different ideas as it was raining quite heavily. Rather than waste my time I decided to do an extra one that was not on my agenda. So armed with a leftover Xmas cheese and pickle sandwich, a packet of Walkers salt and vinegar crisps (other manufacturers are available) and a bottle of water, I have today taken a ride on the good old number 45/47 bus route from Cotteridge to the Bournbrook Inn public house in Stirchley, making good use of my OAP bus pass again.

It did not start too well as the bus arrived 15 mins late. In fact it was so late that the next one was literally behind it. Anyway, I got on at the junction of Watford Road and where the Pershore Road ends in Cotteridge. The 'metropolis' of Cotteridge has changed so much in the 5 years I have been here. Shops have come and gone, the latest being the Greengrocers, so now if anyone needs fresh fruit and vegetables its either the good old Coop or the Spar, neither of which are awe inspiring for getting ideas for meals. As the bus set off down the Pershore Road its not hard to notice that the majority of the living accommodation is flats, most of which are above the shops, coffee houses, barber shops and charity shops. Seems this is the way now with shopping areas, I cannot believe that so many hairdressers can survive in such a small area.

The bus was travelling down Pershore Road now at what I believe was over the 20mph speed limit on this section of the road. Being a retired bus driver, it is not rocket science for me to realise this. Having passed the previously mentioned Coop it crossed the railway line. This is the main line between Birmingham and Redditch/Bromsgrove. As it carried on it passed the end of my street. Looking down I could see the tyre garage opposite my house was doing a good trade and also the hairdressers on the corner had one person in. Yes, another one in the area.

The houses now have changed more to old style town houses: some are sole occupancy but others have been converted to small one-bedroomed apartments. The bus now passes the Cotteridge Junior and Infants School, which is supposed to be one of the best in south Birmingham. Considering it's raining quite heavily there are a lot of people around, mums pushing prams and OAPs pulling shopping trolleys. This section of Pershore Road is a nightmare and an accident hotspot, especially where it crosses the canal. There was a major accident here only the other night and the road was closed for almost two hours.

The canal just crossed is the Worcester and Birmingham Canal. This is going to be one of my paths to photograph in the next few weeks. Once again, this section of the road is town houses on the one side and a vehicle scrapyards on the other. That is then followed by a small retail park that has a well-known builder's merchants and tyre company who apparently have the best and quickest fitters. The road on both sides is a combination of small shops and outlets selling everything that you think you want. There are also a few restaurants, mainly Indian. I have tried a few either by sitting in or as a take-away and to be totally honest I've not had a bad meal at any of them. This area is called Stirchley and is allegedly the up-and-coming area to be in. Well, I am sorry to say that it is a bit of a mess. The buildings are in need of lots of repairs as they have been left for years without any major maintenance being done to them. One good thing about this area, though, is there are some great independent shop traders. One I use regularly is a bakery, selling lovely homemade bread.

The bus is now approaching the old Stirchley swimming baths and almost at the end of this journey for me. Once again, the houses on the right have been turned into smaller flats with possibly 3 or even 4 people in each one. After the baths is again a small retail park with a freezer food outlet, the one that has a name suggesting it is a large countryside outlet. I get off at the next stop which is outside the large Morrisons's supermarket opposite the Bournbrook Inn. So that is the end of my journey, it's still raining, but I have achieved a few objectives, I have used the last bit of the old Xmas cheese and I have not had to have the heating on so have saved myself a few quid on the gas bill.

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