

— BERT BUILT A BUNGALOW —

Just over the hedge at the bottom of Abbey High School's playing field is an excellent though unkempt example of ingenuity and a remnant of a bygone age of public transport. Two rooms of what was to all intents and purposes a bungalow are the bottom sections of double-decker trams that once travelled the network of lines in Coventry.

The tram house has been in existence over 25 years, but is now unoccupied and the days before it is demolished are numbered.

It was built by Mr. Bertram Barnett, who nowadays lives in Barrowfields Lane, Kenilworth. A market gardener with land near Wedgcock close to the Warwick by-pass, he has a stall in Coventry Market.

Market gardening has always been his livelihood, and in 1942 he was an employee at a nursery — still in existence of Glasshouse Lane. It was in a corner of the nursery land that he constructed the tram house, and as soon as it reached a stage where it could be lived in he married and moved in with his wife Dorothy.

Before the wedding, and afterwards, she helped Mr. Barnett at his spare-time occupation of providing somewhere to live when vacant houses were as rare as they can ever have been and materials for what is today termed "do-it-yourself" were practically unobtainable unless they could be contrived from scrap or rubble.

TRAMS FOR SALE

The idea of using tram bodies was inspired by an advertisement which announced that Coventry Corporation was getting rid of its tram service, which had been reduced in favour of buses in the years leading up to the war, and then put out of commission through tracks being blown up during air raids.

There was a choice of top or bottom decks. Mr. Barnett chose the latter, and became possessor of two for £12 each. Transport to Kenilworth cost a further £8 apiece.

Bricks, tiles, slates, doors of all kinds, timber, and everything else required for building was readily obtainable from the heaps of rubble cleared away from bomb-blasted areas of Coventry. Some of it was fairly close at hand, dumped on road verges and other spaces in the countryside around the town.

Shacks and huts knocked up from anything movable were common enough during the war, but they were generally ugly creations. As is clearly seen even today, Mr. Barnett took considerable trouble to effect a design reasonably pleasing to the eye.

BLANKED OFF

The tramcars were placed parallel to each other but some distance apart, and the intervening area blanked off by a wall, creating a spacious

Pop youth says he'll stay home

A solicitor's son, pop-group road manager and guitarist, Phillip Richard Ward, (17) of Kelsey Lane Balsall Common was conditionally discharged for a year on a theft charge, after a promise made to a West London court to live at home.

Ward, who said he had gone back to his family and was now trying to get a job, pleaded guilty to stealing a camera and flash unit together worth £65 belonging to Robin Hancox.

Mr. Hancox, said Detective Dennis Watson, gave Ward a lift with his personal belongings from one flat to another. The camera was in the car, and Ward removed it with his own property. Ward admitted taking the camera, and said he had pawned it. In fact, it was found hidden in his room.

Ward who had been employed as a road manager and guitarist with various pop groups, including The Animals, said he had now gone home and was looking for regular work.

He was conditionally discharged for a year, and ordered to pay £9 10s. compensation.

Two members of Kenilworth Council Surveyor's Department are to attend a day conference, at Bristol on March 1, on the administrative and safety provisions of the Building Regulations.

Once it ran
on city's
tram lines



lounge. A kitchen and a conservatory were made, and at the front a lawn and a kitchen garden created.

Water was piped from a nearby well and a hand pump in the kitchen provided a supply to a bathroom and other points on the premises. The windows on the sides of the trams which faced inwards were wall-papered. Lighting was by mantled oil lamps, for although the trams were wired for mains electricity, none was then available on the site.

COMFORTABLE

A range was installed for cooking and in the "lounge" was fitted a tiled fireplace. There were cupboards, too, and all the refinements of a normal house of the period. The slatted seats removed from the tram were also put to use — as slats for the roof of an extension to a house not far away.

It is a long time since Mr. and Mrs. Barnett left the tram house, which was the property of the owners of the nursery on which it stood. But until a few years ago it was still occupied, and one of the latest people to live in it, describes it as "very comfortable."

Below: Externally, the only readily seen evidence of the origin of some of the building material are two side walls, one of which is pictured. They retain the shape peculiar to tram car coachwork.

The doors at each end of this bungalow give access to rooms made of former Coventry trams. Almost everything else in the building was salvaged from rubble in bombed Coventry.

The nowadays dilapidated interior of a one-time tram, and later a prim, comfortable room. The trap doors in the floor — several sets were installed in each vehicle — gave access to the electric motors which drove the trams.

