

Sunday memories

KEN ROGERS journeys into Liverpool's past



I WAS intrigued by a recent report delivered by [Warwick University](#) that declared 1957 to be the happiest year in our country's glorious history.

What a claim, surely inspired by someone like me who might instinctively review the functional Fifties through the rose-tinted spectacles of a nine-year-old who saw everything then as new, exciting, inspirational and awe-inspiring.

I was therefore particularly delighted to discover that those university dons had not just conjured 1957 out of thin air or even based their claims on Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's famous quote from the time that suggested we had "never had it so good."

No, the university researchers came up with that year after studying eight million books published between 1776 and 2009. It seems that 1957 was the year in which the UK

finally shrugged off the devastation and desperation of the Second World War to declare full employment for a new consumer driven generation that would ultimately launch us into the fashion, art and music revolution that was the Swinging Sixties.

Or as the diaries of two 1957 ladies suggested: "This was the year we discovered central heating, toasters, Wimpy Bars, foreign holidays - and colourful plastic Addis brushes." Wasn't life suddenly wonderful?

But before I explain why I concur with the logic that 1957 truly was a year when the nation suddenly learned to live again and dream impossible dreams after decades of war-inspired poverty and shortages, let me explain why my definition of the true happiness of that era has got little or nothing to do with what would ultimately follow.

The fact is that in 1957, my parents were living in a rented inner city Liverpool terraced house that within five years would be deemed to be at the heart of a so-called slum clearance area. They didn't have a fridge, television or car and most certainly didn't have a bank account to drive forward into this brave new world.

I could have saved [Warwick University](#) an awful lot of time and trouble delving into those eight million books with the simple observation that 1957 was such a happy year because we were still spending only the money we earned and not a penny more. Perhaps therein sits the recipe for true happiness. Oh, and debating whether we should stick with jam roly-poly for pudding or switch to Fanny Cradock's latest fad of melon with a glacé cherry on top.

Well, how happy do you want to be?

■ kenrogersecho@gmail.com





■ Happiness in Liverpool in 1957 was one final tram journey from the Pier Head. Image by J. Copland