

**FRIDAY 4TH, MAY 2007**

**Evacuation Days 1939- 43 My personal recollection by**

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Because there are so many personal memories I have to write them down to select and make them orderly – within my allotted time.

German bombs soon put paid to the old School in Southsea by setting fire to it. I was there for about a year; they changed my name to Dickie, I got hooked on art and I was in Green House but as my parents did not agree for me to be evacuated with the school until later, I arrived at Brockenhurst railway station in 1940 (13) with my gas mask a year late and playing catchup.

I was billeted at the Briars Hostel. Mr. Oliver was the master in charge. Unfortunately he drowned during a school outing to the Lake District. His not coming back was unbelievable for a while.

Briars Hostel was only a stone's throw from the old timber buildings which our school occupied having been vacated by the County High School for boys and girls for their new building complex, where we shared their chemistry and physics labs

However, I didn't do too well in either of those subjects but my knowledge of how to meet with the girls led me to meet my Gloria who lived at Lyndhurst. --- I eventually married her - she is here today and I am still proud to be the only Portsmouth boy to marry a Brockenhurst girl 60 years ago.

Gloria always tells me that 'all' the girls at school at that time had their eyes on me but of course I didn't know that --- and she didn't tell me at that time !. ----, Our relationship endured the school years however all we were married in 1948.--- but more later.

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I was exceedingly fortunate at school to have met Arthur Hitchins when he invited 6 Boys, including me as a potential violinist for his school orchestra, to join him at Parkhill ( a mansion home) just outside Lyndhurst, We lived in the garage annexe flat.

I remember we gathered in the big house during night time air raids and I recall Gerry Bugo, Alan Routley, Stan Buckett, Jimmy Scott, Bernard Jenkins and the Hitchins family sheltering there, sometimes until dawn and ready to dive under the Billiard table.

Inevitably I was encouraged (with Alan Routley), to play violin in the school orchestra and we played hymns with Arthur on the piano at school assembly every day for a while.

Sometimes on my evening trips from Parkhill to meet Gloria she would try to teach me French and I would do her art homework- some of the time ( !).---but I had to walk or cycle two miles back during air raids on Southampton, at dusk, without lights, amid shrapnel raining down from the shells of anti aircraft guns across the heath at Matley. Of course I ended in the ditch on at least one occasion.

On another occasion, Jerry pilots fleeing for home often jettisoned bombs and one stray bomb exploded near to Parkhill leaving a crater in the forest from which we gathered shrapnel souvenirs ---- without much thought of what could have happened to us.

Another day a Jerry fighter plane, for some reason in daylight, strafed the Lyndhurst High street with bullets We dashed into the doorway of the local cinema hall, ----where incidentally, I sometimes secretly smoked a cherrywood pipe and Erinmore tobacco during films and the Pathe news, as did others. Arthur confiscated the pipes and burnt them on the kitchen range when he discovered them.

I also recall hearing about a bomb whistling down towards Lyndhurst fire station. A fire officer there, dashed for cover. The bomb came through the roof, split his chair and buried itself in the floor without exploding. How lucky can you get?

Signs and acts of war were everywhere but I never felt that I would be at risk---- I was wrong of course!

\* \* \*

I remember ---- noisy school lunches cooked in the school kitchens and eaten in relays in the assembly hall --- corned beef fritters and rice pudding were the worst with home made jam which seemed to attract ever searching angry wasps at the kitchen window and being caught in jam jars half filled with water.

But looking back I think those cooking ladies did a grand job with such limited food resource and no refrigerators.

There was also always food on offer for me at Gloria's house:- -rabbit- pigeon, chickens from the garden pen (if the fox did not get them)---and occasionally venison and even SPAM !

I remember, salted green beans, pressure cookers and all kinds of vegetables from allotment or garden, fruit in jars lined up on the pantry shelves and things like powdered milk and powdered eggs- Yuk ! !-and other make do stuff.

Food on ration restricted us to minute amounts of everything and clothes were rehashed but there always seemed to be something during our evacuation days to overcome all this.

A sort of bartering and swapping coupons amongst the adults occurred-- and people were resourceful. Somehow raisins and things were stored up and Christmas cakes and puddings appeared. In summer there was cricket and family sports for all during Carnival days on

"the Bench" at Lyndhurst---

Holidays were therefore a problem in not wanting to miss all these exciting things.

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When the owner of Parkhill died, we had to move on. I went with Arthur Hitchins and the others first to Tweed at Boldre, which according to Gerry Bugo was haunted. He scared us all to death with his stories at night, and then we moved to Lymington and Highbank.

To cycle back and forth to Lyndhurst from Lymington was a bit too far and I became a prefect at the hostel for the younger boys at Arnewood Towers at Sway, run by Mr Davies and his wife. Life there was good.

From Sway I cycled to Lyndhurst or caught the train on a regular basis and eventually got a billet with a very nice old couple at Clay Hill in Lyndhurst, who looked after me when I developed jaundice.

This billet was just downhill from the hostel run by Shacks, another master at school, where I believe the boys really 'enjoyed' breaking the ice to wash on winter mornings before breakfast! - but he was good hearted and is remembered with affection. As are other masters and their wives who ran hostels in the New Forest for the boys of our school away from home. However I guess they must have welcomed holiday breaks from the constant boy presence.

Of course many of the boys were billeted in houses or hostels all over the New Forest and were well looked after. Because of this and an orderly school life, I guess that most found evacuation acceptable.

Our Sports field at Tile? (tithe) Barn at Brockenhurst was popular for those who liked sport as I did. Pete Moore talked to you last year about his prized school first eleven football team. I played for the Colts and occasionally for his first eleven. Monty Vynall was the wizard then and Sticky Stallwood was unbeatable for me running the mile.

My performance in exams was not spectacular but I got my School Certificate with distinction in art. In 1943 Head Master G.B.H.Jones encouraged me to go to art school to study architecture even though I thought it might be beyond me, but it wasn't. I actually found that I was quite good at it and expanded my drawing ability imparted to me from the start at the old school in Southsea by art master Flipp Downing- So I am a qualified Architect, now nearly retired.

Arthur knew about Gloria during school days and once wrote on my end of term report: "rather weak on the 'arts'( hearts) side". Gloria says she was petrified of him- but in later years, she encouraged our friendship with him and Jennifer his wife who we still visit.

I believe that he enjoyed reminiscing about the school and hearing from me and others, especially when I was awarded the MVO by the Queen at Buckingham Palace as her

consultant architect at Sandringham including designing the Visitor Centre which you will see if you go there.

For me Gloria is my constant link with those days.

Revisiting from time to time we see the quiet villages we knew are now very busy with people and traffic,-- yet if we look hard enough, the ghosts of evacuation days are all around but thanks to Evacuation:---

*- The New Forest now has memories of school days, forest*

*smells, rivers and rambling walks;*

*- Where trees die and replenish, primroses and bluebells*

*grow, and where deer, pigs and ponies roam;*

*- Where adders exist and Brusher Mills, a legendary forest hermit made a living catching them.*

The evacuation days have melted now into the history of the school and the New Forest but remain for Old Secundrian EVACUEES to remember, some of them with different tales are here with me at this table tonight.

I enjoyed it all

**Dickie Waite 0407**