

Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945 EVACUEES

Remembering evacuee life in South Harting-2

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By Vic Beckett

I came to Harting when I was 11 years old, with my brothers Ronnie and Stanley and sister Shirley, in September 1939. We were evacuees and arrived, with other children and our teacher Miss Hart, from our school St Albans, Walworth in South East London. We really didn't know what was going on when we left Waterloo station for Petersfield, completing our journey from Petersfield by bus. On arriving in Harting we met children from another school who came with their teacher Mr Greetham. Miss Hart stayed in the cottage next to the Post Office.

My brothers, sister and I were very lucky as we were billeted with the same family, Mr and Mrs Goodeve, at Tye Oak Farm. They had no children of their own and were very kind to us. After about two years Mr Goodeve was forced to sell the farm and we children had to be fostered out to different families, Ronnie to the Norgates in East Harting, Stan to Mrs Greenwood in Nyewood, Shirley to the Walkers at Brookside Cottages and myself to Reg Budd and his wife in Wood House Lane. Reg looked after the horses at the farm and the new owner, Mr Penman, kept all the workers on and I helped after school and at weekends.....

Our teacher, Miss Hart, would have little gatherings for us evacuees at her house. Some children didn't settle and ran away only to be brought back, and I remember two brothers being very unruly and one of the teachers caning them - they eventually went back home.....

My father would visit us occasionally, bringing gifts, but then when their house in London was bombed he and my mother came to live in Harting at Brookside cottages for a rent of 15 shillings a week and I went to live with them.....

Towards the end of the war I worked on the presses in a rubber factory in Petersfield with many people from Portsmouth. I was a bit fed up with country life as there was nothing for me to do and so without telling anyone I caught a train and went back to London where I lodged with some friends. Returning to the village a few days later to collect my belongings I met Jock Strachan who told me that my mother had reported me missing and the police were looking for me. I notified the Midhurst police that I was back but not stopping.

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