

Thanks for the Memory

Memories of Shipton 1950 - 1953

We arrived in Shipton in the summer of 1950 when I was four years old. While my father Frank Roche was at university, we had lived in Marsh Baldon but as he was shortly to start his first teaching post at Burford Grammar school we needed to live somewhat nearer.

I remember visiting the house, Glebe House, which I believe was renamed The Cedars, and waiting at the front door.

The occupier, (who may have been Mr Wake), had three young sons but more importantly, had a lion skin on the entrance hall floor. He dared my sister Susan and me to put our hands in its mouth: she did, I wouldn't!

All I can recall of the subsequent move is getting into the car, an Austin 7 registration CDW 84, a wedding present circa 1939, with our cats Tommy and Smokey amongst a pile of luggage.

A Half-Share of Glebe House

My mother Joan must have been relieved to leave behind the tiny cottage with no mains drainage for this four bedroomed 'half-share' of Glebe House even if it had been the servants' quarters - or so I am told, for we were four children, the youngest, Jonathan, being just two years old. Next door in the other 'half' of the house lived Donald Suddaby, author of several science-fiction books for children. We saw little of him and I have no memory of his wife but I do

remember Dominic and Celia, their children.

The gardens were very attractive, lawns under cedars and there was a path through tall flowers, which lead to the walled garden. At the bottom of the drive

next to the church, was an arched doorway leading to the residence of an elderly lady Mrs Hornby and her little dog Susie; Mrs Hornby had family connections with W.H. Smith.



Slobbering and Howling!

On the other side of the church in one of the houses fronting the cemetery, lived another teacher, Don Martin, his wife Margaret and their sons Brian and Ian. My sister and Brian often redistributed the flowers they found on the graves so that all, in their eyes, had a fair share. I recall the dim interior of St Mary's church and the incumbent, the Reverend Winsor-Kundell. My elder brother Barry was a choirboy.

Our dog, a huge, affectionate, slobbering St. Bernard named Marcus, always howled during the bell-ringing. At such times he would be confined to the shed outside the kitchen door. Marcus would occasionally remove an entire cake or even a Sunday roast from the kitchen table with just one swift move of those great jaws. His height was just right! The marks of his saliva, shaken from his jaws, still adorn the Chinese paintings I inherited from my father.

Marcus loved our cats and would wash them tenderly, holding them down with a huge paw. One stormy night, Smokey disappeared never to be seen again.

Wash Your Mouth Out!

In January 1951 I started at Shipton School. My first teacher was Miss Archer who I recall as somewhat austere, in contrast with the kindly Headmaster Mr Horne who would often call into our classroom to talk to us.

On my first day at school, Miss Archer sat me next to Mervyn (Case). There were two classrooms, the infants' and the juniors'. In between the rooms was the school entrance hall with a Butler sink at the end, where those children heard swearing would have their mouths washed out with soap.

The infants' toilets were outside over to the left and had wooden seats; one even had a double-seat, in case one needed company! In the junior class we graduated to flush toilets.

'Poor Mary is a Weeping'

School beginners used slate boards even then, for writing and number work. Miss Archer also taught knitting. My lack of skill at this, aged five, exasperated her so much that once, she brought down the needles and wool so hard on her tall desk that she caused the end of one needle to fly across the room! However, she also taught us many playground games which I have never forgotten: *Poor Mary is a Weeping*; *Poor Robin is Dead*; *There's a Lady on the Mountain* and *In and Out the Dusty Windows* are some of them. I think she would have retired sometime around 1951/2.

At playtime I remember the girls used the small branches from the churchyard trees

overhanging the playground as 'brushes' to sweep the playground dust into the 'walls' of rooms for playing house. Opposite the school was Dr Scott's house and surgery. I vaguely remember visits there and occasionally seeing his young son.

Further on, along that lane was the village hall where I saw my first pantomime. I remember walking home with the junior class teacher, (Susan?) and looking at the stars.

Ugh - Eat it All Up!

Sports day was held up in the fields. I won nothing, too shy to tell of the hole in my sack. However, back at school on Prize Day, I did receive an Enid Blyton 'Noddy' book as a prize for good reading; I remember the bright red cover. Moving into the junior class was fantastic as there were more books! The entire range of Mary Poppins captivated me. I remember my endless, pencil-written pages of stories and the search for more reading matter.

School dinners were brought in, I believe, and were pretty awful; once I was made to stay behind until I had eaten a great solid lump of white fat: I didn't have the initiative to hide it. (not forgotten, after 55 years!)

The children I remember best are Denise Gorton, Myrtle Kerslake (her father had the garage up towards Milton) and my best friend Fay Brooks who lived at Lodge Cottages and remained a good friend until her untimely death in 2004. I remember Fay's parents and her sisters Rosemary and Barbara. I also remember Johnny Mattock and his mother and Mervyn of course. There are memories of other families, names forgotten; one family lived up the Ascott Road. During one visit,

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I got stuck in the boy's pedal car; at six years of age and tall, I should have known better.

I remember the gasworks in Gasworks Lane; going to the post office and the savings stamps with Prince Charles and Princess Anne's faces that we stuck into little long books. I remember the girl who walked me home from school (was it Marilyn or Barbara?) telling me sadly that the King was dead - just before my 6th birthday.

So Little Has Changed

At Easter 1953, we moved again; this time my father had a post at another grammar school in Gloucestershire. As we were in temporary accommodation we could not take our beloved Marcus. He was found another home in the country and was happy there. Last November I went back to Shipton, primarily to pay my last respects to Fay.

I stayed overnight in order to revisit places from my past.

Having visited the cemetery and walked around the village, I went up the lane leading to the rear of *Glebe House* and was fortunate enough to meet Rod and John. I saw the shed where my father had once kept his gardening and work tools and where Marcus howled during bell-ringing. It was good to know that much of the house and stables remain the same.

My memory of the interior of the house, after five decades, holds good, it seems. It was strange to see the archway filled in but at least it's still there. The additional garden is beautiful. The lawns and cedars look the same as they did fifty years ago. It was sad to see the walled garden gone, sold off for housing, but overall, I am pleased that so little has altered in those five decades.

Adrienne Roche

Shipton School in 1909

Last July, whilst staying in Milton with Margaret Bradley, the widow of my cousin Robert Bradley, I bought a copy of the August / September issue of *The Wychwood*.

This featured the Milton Cricket team

in 1950 and my late cousin Bob was easily recognisable. Robert's late father, Reginald Bradley, was one of my mother's brothers. Beatrice and Bob, together with their other brothers Horace,

Frederick and George went to Shipton School.



The photograph shown here was taken in the school grounds 1909.

My mother is third from the left on the first row and Reginald is the little boy in the centre of the middle row.

Can anyone name any of the other pupils? I went to Shipton School during the first months of the Second World War, when Mr. Horne was headmaster.

Mrs P.R. Wevill