

Special Feature

Memories of Eynsham Hall

As a newcomer, one of my proudest possessions is a National Registration Card proving that I was in fact living in North Leigh more than sixty years ago. How come?

Police Academy, Oxfordshire Style

North Leigh was the home of Eynsham Hall, the Police Training College for most of the forces in South East England from the end of the last war to the mid 1980s. My father was in one of the first batches of recruits to be trained there after the war. He went back as an instructor in the early 1950s and then became Deputy Commandant in the 1960s. As a child and teenager I spent several school holidays at this splendid Victorian country house built by the Mason family in the 1850s and now a luxurious centre for conferences and wedding receptions.

Fast -Track Poodle

I remember arriving late at night at Oxford Station with my mother and sister and being picked up and whisked through the darkest night I had ever experienced, at last just making out the solid outline of the Hall at the end of a long, oak - lined drive. If you were a particularly well behaved seven year old, the next morning you might be allowed to beat the large brass gong for breakfast at the end of long, polished linoleum corridors - the same lethal corridors which my father's

toy poodle would slide along some fifteen years later having unwisely first built up a head of steam.

Police training was a lot tougher in those days. The officers had all served in the forces during the war. My father was ex Coldstream Guards as was his drill Sergeant. There was a lot of drill and frequently recruits were seen to peel off

from crooked ranks to run to the end of the long drive (where North Leigh Football team now plays) as a punishment.

However some got their revenge.

Several months after the passing-out

of one course, an inexplicable and rather unpleasant smell pervaded the breakfast room. One of the instructors dropped his fork and, while picking it up, noticed under the table an enormous patch of green radiating out from a nailed kipper!

Rough Justice

It was my father's custom to personally welcome the men from his own Essex force when they first arrived. One day he thought he recognised a new recruit; "Don't I know you son?" "Yes Sir," came the answer, "We met once before Sir. It was Guy Fawkes Night 1956 when there was a serious affray with dozens of Teddy boys at the Fortune of War Pub in Laindon. As you got out of your car, you hit the first Teddy Boy on your left. That was me Sir. Thank you Sir. It did me a lot of good."

Alan Vickers

