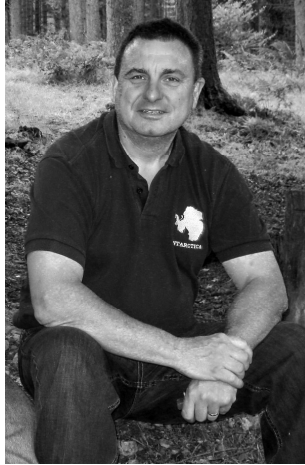


“Why it’s little Jimmy Hudson!”

It is a pleasure to publish Jim’s reminiscences of a childhood spent in Shipton-under-Wychwood, particularly as he was instantly recognizable to our Publisher!

My name is Jim Hudson; I live in County Durham and work in ICT for a local council. Before that, I served all over the world in the Royal Navy and long before that and before my wanderings began, during the mid 1960s, I was a small child living with my parents in Shipton-under-Wychwood.



The Smiths’ Bus

Living at the top of Fiddler’s Hill in Cherry Tree Cottage, I would walk to St Mary’s School each morning and home again that evening usually on my own; this would be from the age of about five. Sometimes on the way home, if I was lucky, I would be picked up by the Smiths Industries’ bus taking workers home from the factory in Witney. I would walk down the length of the bus to where my Dad would be sitting and we would go home together. If I had missed the bus, I would walk home past an old hand-operated water pump. During the summer (and it always seemed to be summer) I would stop to wash my face and hair, drinking the cool water as I did so.

I remember at the School, one of the greatest honours was to be allowed to ring the school bell at dinnertime. A chain hung from the bell in a small bell-house at the top of the school, ran down a cast iron tube and into the hallway. I only remember being allowed to ring the bell once but I can still remember the feeling of importance. I must have been a very

good lad that day. Dinner time meant being served food that had been cooked and ferried in from Burford Primary School. It generally arrived in an open wagon during morning break, packed into large metal flasks. The drivers would employ all us kids to hump it off the wagon and into the kitchens, two kids to one flask. We finished the work and got stuck into the small one-third pints of milk we

received mid-morning, small glass milk-bottles and straws, served from battered metal crates.

Another Village!

On hot days, we were sometimes allowed to take the class desks and chairs outside into the courtyard. Again during the break, we sometimes stacked the tables up, one on top of another with chairs on top of that. We used this as a homemade climbing frame and called it ‘Table and Chairs play’. The teachers would stand by, telling us to be careful and not get ourselves hurt. At Harvest Festival, we would all troop to church. Two by two, and it had to be boy next to girl - we were not allowed to walk next to our mates. At church we boys had to take off our school caps, girls of course could leave their bonnets on. Teachers fussed over us, making sure our hair was combed and our partings straight. They would spit on handkerchiefs and rub the muck off our faces. Also once a term or so we would

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walk along the road - two by two again, all the way to Ascott-under-Wychwood School where we could bathe in their new bathing pool. It was three foot deep and outdoors. It was great fun, not only because we were splashing about in the water, but also because the whole class had walked all the way along a road to Ascott ... and that was another village!

Hay-Bale Heaven

Outside of school, my mates and I would make camps and dens out of the hay bales in the fields. Staking them up, we would make structures two or even three storeys high. We helped the farmers to collect them at the end of the summer, riding on the open trailer and lifting the bales on. Above us, the Red Arrows aerobatic display team, based at Little Rissington, would be practising their next air display. I

thought it was perfectly normal to have an air display nearly every day. We spent long afternoons building go-carts from old tea chests and pram wheels. These carts were very special as you actually rode *inside* them rather like an armoured car. With a crew of two, one lad driving and one in the back with his head stuck out of a hatch, we ran them down Fiddlers Hill. Whoever was driving nearly always lost control at some point and crashed. We didn't bother with brakes either, once the cart was going down the hill you could not stop it and you were therefore committed to experience whatever happened next. We certainly never

worried about cars coming the other way. We were all grazed up and cut but it was great fun, we dusted ourselves down and pushed the cart back up for the next run. I often think back to my time in Shipton, and surprise myself that I only lived there for about four years. Even now, so many years later I still consider myself as "growing up in Shipton" and consider it to be my spiritual home.

Are YOU in the Photograph?

Here is a photograph of our school. It is dated on the back as 1967, so I would have been eight years old. I am the lad in



check trousers, centre front. Second lad to the right of me is Duncan Barney and five to my left is Nigel Barrett. We are all now in contact and are considering a school reunion, perhaps next year or the year after. So, are YOU in this photograph?

Perhaps you know someone in it or were you at Shipton School in the mid 60s? If so, we would very much like to hear from you. We all look so happy; it would be great if we can get together again. Please contact me on: 0191 5126420 or at: jimahudson@sky.com

Jim Hudson