

Dear Trevor and Maria,

Monday 25th May 2020.

A step back in time for Hadleigh Residents.

To follow up on our recent telephone conversation when we talked about me doing a write up about Hadleigh following you kindly sending me print outs from the website dedicated to Thundersley history I have now completed this and enclose a copy for you to send off on my behalf.

I was not quite certain how it was best for me to present this as although I can remember many children from the Hadleigh area at the time, the photos of them on the 1945 VE street party photos are rather small for me to accurately name them.

So how I decided to present it was as follows :

1. To start by giving a brief account of myself during my primary school days.
2. Then to write about the area as it was then.
3. A very brief account of school days at St. Johns naming a couple of classmates that I could remember.
4. Summation of names of children living in Hadleigh during the 1940's/1950's.
5. Finally, about shops and businesses in immediate vicinity at the time.

I tried to keep it brief but it still amounted to 16 pages I hope this is OK.

Hopefully if the write up is put on the web persons will at least have a list of several names that would perhaps jog their memory, be of interest and help them in being able then to set against the presented school 1945 VE street photos.

If you consider the write up worthwhile perhaps you could send it off on my behalf to see if the contents are of interest to historians about Hadleigh at the time.

As they say I leave the ball in your court.

Keep safe and well and look after yourselves.

Love.

Robin. x

Hadleigh – A step back in time by Robin Thorn.

(Primarily written with Hadleigh Elder residents in mind).

I was born in 1935 and my parents moved to Hadleigh in 1939 just prior to the outbreak of WWII.

I spent my entire childhood in Hadleigh during the war years and thereafter up to the age of 15 and wish to share some of my fond memories with you.

Hadleigh offers a unique charm, I was very happy living there and got to know the area extremely well.

First, we lived in rented accommodation "Leafdene" a bungalow near The Woods just off Scrub Lane and then into a bungalow in Arcadian Gardens "Louisa" now No. 19.

My parents had the choice of two bungalows both in Arcadian Gardens "Multiflora" and "Louisa" that were up for sale choosing "Louisa".

We learned that it had previously been used as a nursery school and altered by taking down the dividing wall between the lounge and adjoining bedroom making one large room in to a classroom.

The school run by Miss Howship realised that the school needed more space and moved in to a much larger semi-detached house "Bonchurch" (now No. 15) two doors away and set up school there.

On retirement Miss Howship spoke to my mother and gave her many school books such as geographical magazines which she thought would be useful for my education.

Hadleigh had many shops and was well served with other essential services and as such was a self-supporting village.

Hadleigh Primary was a small school but was nevertheless well maintained with regular painting of the buildings by painters Dowling of Rayleigh.

Hadleigh primary school in Church Road was a marvellous school with an excellent Headmaster Mr HR Tutt and teachers, Mr Lambourne who took classes for arithmetic, English, poetry etc. and his wife who taught art, Mr Ward science, Mr Bell woodwork teacher and Miss Matthias music.

Each morning we had assembly held by Mr Tutt telling us about school matters and of any school forthcoming events including finishing with a hymn.

The Headmaster Mr Tutt retired in 1947 and informed us in assembly that he was looking forward to his retirement but was equally sad that he would not be seeing us any more, he said however that he was a keen bird watcher and was looking forward to having the time to watch the birds in his garden in the Benfleet Road.

Mr Lambourne was my favourite teacher making every lesson exciting and challenging, he particularly impressed me when taking poetry class explaining that poetry can show things in a very explicit way.

One example that has always remained with me was a piece of prose taken from a book written by Charles Dickens :

Far and wide lay a ruined country yielding nothing but desolation, every green leaf and blade of grass was as shrivelled and poor as the miserable people everything was bowed down, dejected, oppressed and broken, hedges, fences, domesticated animals, men women and children all worn out.

Mr Lambourne explained that in this short piece of prose by showing imagination you can immediately relate and visualise the situation.

Examples of snippets from poems he also demonstrated was :

Across the bridge, Lord Marmion rode his scar on his right cheek revealed a token true of Bosworth field.

Another extract from a poem Mr Lambourne told us about was of a prisoner awaiting hanging for his crimes was contemplating on his days in the past when he was at school and he was thinking back and of one day in particular a sports day where he was competing – a snippet is as follows

I see the school close sunny and green, the stand by the parapet wall with the crown roaring between my name overall.

I can easily relate to each of these situations and get great satisfaction from them, stimulating my mind, I wonder if others that were in my class at the time enjoyed listening to Mr Lambourne and enjoyed poetry as much as I did?

There were no woodworking facilities at the school but we were taken each Thursday by coach to Benfleet school in the High Road and under the instruction of Mr Bell I gained invaluable use of tools and carpentry knowledge.

I can vividly remember Miss Matthias our music teacher, teaching us several songs “Greensleeves” and “Where ere you walk” come to mind.

I can recall Mr Lambourne on one occasion introducing the class to classical music whilst he was planning a puppet show and he used the music of Tchaikovsky “The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy” from “The Nutcracker Suite” as background music and taught us many other such classical music compositions – I have a lot to thank him for, as had he not taught the class about classical music I may well not have known what joy it can offer.

The children in my class were all reasonably intelligent but one outshone the others, I can't remember his Christian name but his surname was Phillips (he lived in a flat above the men's hairdressing saloon/Ross boot repairer shop on the London road Hadleigh).

He invariable came top in most subjects and was an inspiration for me to try harder and I am sure several of the others in the same class also to emulate or beat him, I wonder if anyone else can remember him?

Another talented boy was Ben Thompson who lived in the Kingsway Parade with his parents – his father ran an antique and furniture business, Ben was a brilliant artist drawing incredible portraits of people and their facial expressions and I often wonder what became of him?

Tom Corby was another boy (who lived in Cranbrook Avenue) I recall an occasion where a teacher after reading a story he had written for homework said he showed great talent with his writing skills and would be an excellent news reporter, which he told me was his wish on leaving school.

Each Saturday morning there was a cinema club for young children at the Kingsway Cinema showing various cowboy and adventure serials, and comedy cartoons such as Tom and Jerry, Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse.

The Saturday morning at the cinema was always well attended starting off with all the children singing the following verse :

We are the boys and girls well known as

minors of the ABC

Every Saturday we line up, to see and the films we like

and shout aloud with glee.

Just a happy band are we

Were all pals together we're minors of the ABC.

Some Hadleigh characters that come to mind are firstly a man called Monty (who lived on the corner bungalow of Rectory Road and New Road) and I often spoke to him when I passed his bungalow on the way home from school and greatly admired the way that he had planned his garden with a mass of different coloured roses which he tended carefully – regrettably the property has since been demolished.

As a growing teenager, I was always tinkering with bikes or other such things and loved to go down the Rayleigh Road on my bicycle to Busters Junk yard which was half way along The Chase (unmade then) and rummage amongst the many piled up metal and other assorted items - again I wonder if others can remember going there?

Outside of our bungalow was a street lamp lit by gas and daily a man riding his bicycle would light or turn it off, this has long since been replaced with electric lighting.

Every Sunday mid-morning a man wheeling a barrow filled with fresh sea food from Leigh Cockle sheds would come along Arcadian Gardens to sell his fish, we often bought shrimps, cockles from him.

In those days, there were red "Westcliff Motor Company" buses that travelled throughout the Southend-on-Sea area and one service terminated at Victoria House Corner and parked at the Rayleigh Road end of Arcadian Gardens and I as a young boy used to ask the conductor or driver if I could have some used tickets.

The thickish cardboard tickets were in three colours red, green and yellow and were held in a spring clip board, in imperial values I recall of 1, 2 and 3 pence printed on them and I used to make concertinas out of them.

There was a Bus garage at Victoria House Corner housing, Green Benfleet and Canvey Motor Bus Company vehicles, and the company also had a smaller garage for their buses at the corner of Oak Road South.

There were two large detached properties on either side of Rayleigh Road at Victoria House corner, one at the end of Arcadian Gardens (which housed two pantechnicons within its grounds) the other facing immediately across on the other side of the main road, when a new roundabout was planned the whole configuration of the road was altered involving the demolition of one house, and the end of Arcadian Gardens being sealed off turning it into a cul-de-sac.

The High Street and London Road in the town centre location which run parallel with each other had two-way traffic when I was a young boy but now is one way.

Main facilities apart from Shops.

There was a Doctors surgery in a house in Beresford Gardens next to the alleyway through Falcus Bros builders yard.

Doctor Magladerys practice was on the corner of Castle Lane in a beautiful detached house within lovely grounds – since regrettably demolished and the site has had shops and flats development.

The Police station was sited in a house in Hall Crescent.

The Church of St. James the Less still stands proudly between the junction of the London Road and the High Street, built circa 1200 it was re-roofed just after the war late 1940's, its resident Vicar was the Reverent Stamford who lived in a semi-detached house in Arcadian Gardens – he had an adopted son Ernest who was about 12 years of age in the late 1940's.

At the Rayleigh Weir was a speed track in the late 1940's/early 1950's which people used to like to support, called the Rayleigh Rockets and many fans bought small Rocket badges one for each year which could be joined together to form a linked chain.

The main attraction for local entertainment was the "Kingsway Cinema" in the centre of town with a main and a second feature films and at the midway interval trailers were shown of forthcoming attractions.

During the interval whilst patrons were buying ice creams and drinks a "Compton" Organ arose slowly from the orchestra pit playing lively music whilst at the same time adverts were displayed on the cinema screen with glass plates slides inscribed by theatre staff displaying local firms merchandise.

My father Mr Harry Thorn was the manager of the "Kingsway Cinema" for about 3 years as well as managing the "Mascot" and "Metropole" cinemas in Westcliff-on-Sea and two of my brothers Nelson and Tony were projectionists at the "Kingsway".

The "Kingsway Cinema" was privately owned by a lady, it has now been demolished and the site has now become a supermarket.

All three of my brothers Nelson, Tony and David and their friends the Ward twins served as ARP wardens.

One pleasure of mine whilst in my teens was going for a walk in West Wood which was at the back of my house behind Beresford Gardens and next to this was a corn field, part of this has now become West Wood housing estate in Falbro Crescent.

Another enjoyable walk that my mother and I took was either to Dawes Heath towards Bramble Lane or along Scrub Lane which was in my boyhood days unmade or adopted it is now a busy long through road towards Belfairs but regrettable today motorists have 27 very unpleasant road safety humps to traverse.

A further attraction nearby was Thundersley Glen where I used to catch tadpoles and walk along the meandering paths admiring the trees and watching the birds.

On the corner of Beresford Gardens and Arcadian Gardens was a Methodist church.

A school is now built on land off Beresford Gardens but when I was a boy it was a vast area of land growing wheat and numerous haystacks were built.

At the back of our bungalow in Arcadian Gardens flanking Beresford Gardens was an allotment this has since been built on.

I used to ride on my bike to Castle Lane to walk around Hadleigh castle which was unfortunately was partly in ruins, one of the towers was called by us as the armchair which lots of people used to climb up to, the castle is now under the control of a trust which is a good thing so as to protect our heritage.

During my school days, which were primarily during the war years the class often had to quickly leave the school, upon hearing the fire station air raid siren, put on gas masks and run across to the safety of a large air raid shelter on the field adjacent to the school until the all clear was sounded.

I heard on several occasions the buzz of the German Doodlebugs above us with their frightening sound knowing the moment the engine stopped the bomb would drop instantaneously causing much harm, one dropped in nearby Rayleigh killing one of my brother's teachers Mrs Pickering.

During the war years, the school provided us as young children with free cocoa powder and malt extract to help parents keep their children well and upkeep moral.

Hadleigh Primary School gave each child a free third of a pint of fresh milk each day.

Another activity enjoyed by local folk was John Burrows recreation ground at the corner of Western Road/New Road and Templewood Road where our school used to hold its sports day, in the days when we used the recreation ground it was divided by a line of trees these have been removed now and the ground opened up.

Hadleigh and Thundersley cricket club regularly played there, the ground was in my early days attended to by a Mr Bashford who marked and rolled out the pitch.

Two club players that I reflect back on watching play was Bob Harwood (I think this name is correct) a left hander, hard hitter and heavy scoring batsman a joy to watch and Mr Scrivener (landlord of "The Castle Pub" in the High Street) with an unusual squat stance but nevertheless an excellent batsman.

Ballard Brothers builders with offices and yard just off the London Road in the Benfleet Road at Victoria House Corner built the cricket club pavilion.

Whilst I was growing up during the 1940's/1950' era Hadleigh had several open spaces, one at Victoria House Corner just off the Rayleigh Road (now built on), horses owned by Joe the landlord of "The Waggon and Horses" pub grazed on land in a field off Common Hall Lane and there was a large open space with a pond, now occupied by housing in Willow Walk.

Land on the London Road facing the Fire Station was an open space when I was a boy but has since had a Supermarket built on it.

Our class was taken occasionally to an allotment in Rectory Road where a teacher taught us about growing and planting vegetables and I recall happily growing carrots there – this now a car park.

Lizzy Landridges parents ran art instruction classes in their house in Shipwrights Drive Thundersley and although I went on two or three occasions it became evident that I had no natural ability for this.

To earn some pocket money, I had a paper round in the area and remember two homes that I delivered papers too very well in the London Road opposite Parkfields Parade a bungalow "Restormel" and a lovely Tudor type detached house called "Greywalls" where lived a smartly dressed city gentleman, both properties are unfortunately no longer there being demolished together with some other properties for new housing.

Another weekend part time job that I did was to deliver fish on a trade bike for White Heather fisheries that was opposite Malyons/Badgers Hall Avenue Thundersley (now I believe is a car sales showroom).

Before Malyons was developed for houses when I delivered newspapers I remember there being one house set a long way back off the London Road with a very long straight drive up to it.

For two or so years up to the age of about 11 I regularly attended Sunday school at the Church of England St. James the Less rushing each week into the vestry putting on a white surplus and ruff collar to sing in the choir.

The church organ was not electrically operated as organs are today it needed someone to hand pump wind into the organ bellows so that the organist could play.

Another point that people of the time will well remember was Winter of 1947 when it was exceptionally cold with 6 ft. snow drifts and the lead pipework that most homes had, froze up causing plumbing pipes to burst.

**Brief account of school days at St. Johns Secondary Modern School –
Shipwrights Drive Thundersley.**

I attended St. Johns school from 1947 to 1951.

The headmaster was Mr Evans.

The school had been substantially built when war was declared all building work stopped.

Building work recommenced a few years after the war ended in May 1945 and I was lucky as it had just been finished for occupation at the same time as I was leaving primary school so I was in the first class of pupils to use the new school.

The school was very large having the latest sports and other facilities at the time well-planned and freshly painted classrooms on two floors.

Friends/acquaintances at King John School.

Terry Harmann.

David Toplis. (a really good goal keeper).

Summation of Names of Children living in Hadleigh during the 1940's/1950's.

Class mates.

Twins John and James Clubb. (lived in Oak Road South).

Philips. (? Christian name).

Thelma Hamilton.

Iris Fern. (Lived in Castle Lane – her parents ran a shop halfway down Castle Lane selling soft drinks and ice cream).

Peter Lasota.

Jimmy Schooling. (lived in Scrub Lane corner of Bilton Road where his parents owned a grocery store and had a large orchard with pond full of fish).

Fred Potter.

Colin Nightingdale. (on leaving school worked at the boat yard at Leigh cockle sheds for Johnson Sons and Jago).

Croucher Twins. (lived in Homested Gardens).

? Sheila (Lived in flat above Central Garage).

Thomas Corby. (lived in Cranbrook Avenue).

Shirley Story.

Ben Thompson. (lived in London Road opposite the "Kingsway Cinema").

Albert Stockford. (I remember him and his sister performing at one of the school plays the song entitled "We're a couple of swells " they gave a very good performance).

Peter Leggett. (Lived in a bungalow in Church Road next to the school).

Local friends outside of School.

Basil Scott. (He lived in Arcadian Gardens).

Peter Hayward. (He lived in Woodcroft Close).

Fred Lowe and his brothers. (They lived in the tower house at the corner of Arcadian Gardens and Common Hall Lane – before moving to a bungalow in Scrub Lane – their father had a pigeon loft in their garden and I often watched the birds in flight).

Derek Robinson. (Lived initially in Rayleigh Road in a house next to West Wood "Snaresbrook" just past Beresford Gardens before moving into a detached bungalow built by his father in Common Hall Lane).

Derek Cotgrove. (Lived in Beresford Gardens).

Ballard brothers.

Brian Speller. (Lived in Benfleet Road).

Other persons – friends of my older brothers.

Clifford Falcus. (Son of Mr and Mrs Falcus a building firm that lived in a lovely large house at the end of Beresford Gardens and Common Hall lane having an exceptionally large plot - this has since been demolished and now forms part of the estate off Falbro Crescent aptly named after Falcus – Clifford in later years had a bungalow built in Eastwood Road at the London Road end called "Little Arcadian").

Colin Bright. (Arcadian Gardens).

Ward twins. (Arcadian Gardens).

Ray Webb.

Adults in Arcadian Gardens.

Next door neighbour Mr Bishop.

Next door neighbour Mr Hopkins.

Miss Howship. (Nursery school teacher).

Mr A V Rogers. (Insurance Broker).

Mr Bridge. (Ford motors).

The Reverent Stamford and his adopted son Ernest. (St. James the Less Church).

Reverent Strip. "Moorings". (Pastor of Elam Church).

Joe who worked for "Falcus Bros" in their plant yard.

Shops and Businesses in immediate Hadleigh vicinity.

Victoria House Corner Parade of shops.

Workman's café. (During the war years tea was rationed so to eke out supply my mother used to send me to the café with a pint jug and for 1/- the café would fill it and I would quickly rush back so that we could enjoy it at home.

Cooks confectionary and small everyday goods – I used as a young boy to go to Cooks and buy with my pocket money Sherbet dabs and for one penny I could buy a paper coloured Union Jack flag fixed around a dress makers pin. (On retirement, the Cook's had a bungalow built at the end of Victoria House Corner parade row of shops).

Deans Greengrocery and adjoining Butchers shop.

Perry's Newsagent.

Haberdashery.

Greens grocery shop.

Mr White gent's hairdresser.

"Montisdene" A timber framed bungalow on London Road near Hall Crescent selling second hand furniture etc.

Parkfields Parade.

Norton's bike shop.

Ladies hairdresser.

Newsagent.

Businesses between Victoria House Corner and Thundersley Glen.

Glansons/Glandfield clothing Manufacturing Factory

Mummery's Nurseries.

White Heather Fisheries.

Kingsway Parade Area.

Loxleys. Grocery. Corner of Common Hall Lane and New Road.

Stibbards Funeral Parlour and Chapel of Rest. Next door to Loxleys.

Yeaxlees.

Drayton Wright. (Newsagent).

Thompsons. (Antiques and furniture)

Reynolds Scrap Yard. Corner of Homestead Gardens.

Sweet shop run by Mr Bambury. During wartime to help the war effort he paid for any bundles of old newspapers that was brought to him so that they could be recycled he also paid a few pence for each returned empty mineral bottle so they could be re-used. Next door to Reynolds scrap yard.

Post and Sorting Office.

Library.

Dossetts Bakery. (We loved their new freshly baked square tin loaves from their bakery in Maple Avenue Leigh-on-Sea and their marvellous jam doughnuts).

Chemists.

Lawrence. Newsagent and confectionary.

Red Rose Poster Company. – High Street.

Gallaghers. Butchers. (corner of Castle Lane).

Webbs Watch repairer.

Co-operative food store.

Jones. Newsagent – Rectory Road.

Delaware Hardware Store – Rectory Road.

Fish shop specialising in smoked kippers – Rectory Road.

Between Hadleigh Church and Burnt Post (Tattershall Gardens).

Lloyds Bank.

Ross. Boot and shoe repairer.

Nortons Removals. Corner of Oak Road North.

Trevarth Manufacturing Clothing factory. (London Road opposite Ash Road).

**“Castle Cleaners”, then became “Dane Dye Works” and finally “Sketchley”.
Corner of Meadow Road.**

Owens Greengrocery.

Page and Tapping. Newsagent. London Road on Corner of Castle Road.

A V Rogers Insurance Services.

Hamilton Paints. London Road between Meadow Road and Broughton Road.

Church Road Motors.

**Mr Bowery ran a grocery shop on the corner of Broughton Road – opposite
the Salvation Army farmland.**

**Looking at the list of shops etc. in Hadleigh at the time how many names can
you remember from back then?**

**Should it be of interest, I and my wife wrote in 2013 an “Appraisal of
Southend-on-Sea” with our recollections of the town and surrounding area in
its 1950’s/1960’s heyday when we were living there in our early teens and
that people may like to read, reminisce and look back on.**

May 2020