

LIVING IN WALLISDOWN/TALBOT VILLAGE. 1946. 1975.

My name is John Frederick Badcock, I was born in the old Boscombe hospital, on 29th August 1946, and soon after was taken to my parent's home, in Bascott Road, in Wattisdown.

One of the first things that I can recall, with any certainty, was going with my father on his bike, sitting on a child seat on the crossbar, on the Sunday afternoon, to go and have a look at the school that I would be starting at, the following day, namely St. Marks School, Tatbot viltage, to me aged five, this was a bit scary, but anyhow the next day came and I remember the boy living next door to us also started school the same day, so I was not alone, I remember sometimes being taken to school, or collected from school, by either my mother, or my next door neighbour, on a sort of rotor basis I used to stay to school dinner each school day, and the staff in the dining Hall were very strict, every child had to eat what was put before them, or they lost out on their lunch break playtime, I believe that in 1951 wartime food rationing was still in place throughout the whole of the U.K. and as far as these people were concerned, "Your parents paid for this dinner for you, and you are going to sit there until your plate is empty", was the order of the Day.

In those days, the dinner plates were all made up behind the serving area's shutters, and as soon as the staff lifted the shutters, we all had to go up to the counter and pick up a plate with the food already on it, there was no choice by the kid in question, you had what was given to you, and no arguments, if you did not like something, then though (thank goodness today's kids have a free choice as to what goes on their plates)!

I seem to recall that every Monday was salad, and one of the items on the plate was cheese! I remember trying it once and hating it! I can't remember if it made me sick or not, but I tried to avoid cheese in future Monday's dinners, it wasn't easy to put the cheese onto another kid's plate whilst the dinner time supervisor was not looking, but sometimes I was lucky, but most of the time I was not, and had to give up my dinnertime play session.

The same thing happened on a Friday, when it was Fish, the same rules applied, and I would lose my dinnertime play session then as well, I cannot remember how long this state of affairs lasted before someone, somewhere realised the situation and remedied it, but I seem to remember having to sit at another table in the dining hall, usually by myself, but sometimes with someone else! Looking back on it now it seemed so wrong to punish a young child simply because they didn't like something on their dinner plate!

On Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays all was welt, as on those days were things that I enjoyed for my dinner.

To this very day, I have NEVER eaten cheese of any kind, nor fish of any kind, since the year 1951.

I have been thinking about the names of the Teachers that were there between 1951 and 1958 (when I moved to Oakmead school), and the names that I remember are, Ms Taylor, Miss Goldman, Mr Beech, and the Head Teacher was Mr Cook, I think there were four or five

classrooms at that time, but I cannot remember any other names, Mr Beech had the classroom that stood atone, and he had the children who were in their final year at the school, after seventy years or so, att of these people are now deceased, and education itself has changed dramatically during that time.

During the summer months the teachers used to take the class outside in the fresh air on a nice sunny day, and we occasionally went for a "nature walk" through the woods, and learned about wildflowers, birds, and other things, I used to love this, the class would return to the classroom and write up about att we had seen, another thing the teachers would do on occasions is to do "Country dancing", and I remember the music came from a wind-up gramophone with a steel stylus, praying 78rpm records, the same applied in May each year, when they would have the girls dancing around the maypole.

During the winter months, when it got pretty cold, I remember the Caretaker bringing the children's milk bottles into the classrooms and putting them around the cast iron stove to thaw out the ice.

When I was at the school, I remember there were a tot of boys who were living at the Talbot Manor Boy's home attending the school, some of these were orphans, or kids who had been put in the care of the courts, etc, on the whole they got along well with the rest of the school, however, I do remember one of these boys setting fire to the hedge of one of the gardens the one closest to the school dining halt, I remember that it became quite a blaze before the Fire Brigade showed up and put it out, the boy in question was given a heavy caning in front of the class.

Enough about the school, my thoughts now go to my home and location as a kid, we had the expanse of Turbary Gommon at the end of our road, and that was our playground, it was a big piece of moorland, with gorse, heather and scrub bushes, footpaths had been titeratty carved into the ground by countless numbers of feet and bikes and were several inches deeper than the ground on either side! There was an old sand pit there, which had been "worked out", and the local kids used to love to ride their bikes up and down the watts of the crater, there was a football pitch, and changing hut and there used to be regular matches played there by amateur teams, it also used to be the council's rubbish tip for several years, until that was full, it was then covered in soil, and left to become today's wildlife reserve.

I remember that one year, possibly 1961, there was an exhibition by firms who dealt in heavy earth moving machines, and for a few days, buttdozers, excavators, and dump trucks were carving up a part of the common, and left a very large mound of soil sand behind them when they left, us kids watched these machines at work, and marvelled at their power. Growing up in Bascott Road, we had the neighbour's kids as our friends, and we used to play together, mainly on the common.

Back then, there seemed to be a sort of "rivalry" between Bournemouth and Poole, as to which was the better town to live in, and the centre line running along Walltisdown Road between the crossroads and Ringwood Road, and of course it was also the County tine, Hampshire on one side and Dorset on the other, I used to love to go on the Hants and Dorset bus to Branksome, to watch the trains, sitting at the front of the double decker,

going over the 'Alder taps", I used to wonder how on earth those buses ever made it up those hills, they looked so steep, in this modern age, I guess that bus services are now de-regulated, and I believe that Hants & Dorset buses no longer serve the routes they did in my time in Bournemouth? And that Yellow Buses go right into Poole, something that was unheard of previously.

Growing up, with a lot less vehicles on our roads, I used to love riding my bike, after I was about 12 years old, I regularly rode to Wimborne market, in the school holidays, and I remember buying a couple of young rabbits and bringing them home, I think they were 216d each? My Dad's grass-box from his lawn mower used to fit onto my bike's handlebars perfectly, and with a fitted piece of wire mesh over the open front of the grass-box, got them home in perfect condition! I had those two bunnies for a few years, my Dad had made me a nice hutch to keep them in.

One of my Aunts lived on a dairy farm situated right next to Hurn airport, I had a real love for the farm, the cows, etc, my Aunt & Uncle had three grown-up Sons who all worked on the farm, they were only employees, the farm was not in their family, but most Saturdays I would go there, and help out my cousins with farm duties, my Aunt used to make a super dinner for us all, my cousin June was two years older than I was, and was into the "pop music" of the day, and I loved playing her records whilst I was there, I never had a record player of my own at home.

Other trips that I made was to Salisbury on the train, from Branksome station, before all those rural lines ceased to exist, thanks to a certain Dr. B. Growing up I remember that my Mother was very strict as regards going to church and Sunday school every week, and it got to the point where I hated going, and religion in general, and tried to avoid going to Sunday School particularly, but when I became 15 years old, and finished school at Oakmead, and began to work for my living, I totally finished with religion all together, and apart from attending a couple of funerals and weddings, I have never been back inside a church, I have my own views on religion, which I shall keep to myself.

Finally, I would say that my early childhood, like so many other kids of my time were happy and care-free times, Wallisdown, and Bournemouth were nice places to be, much nicer than they are in this modern age, over-run with cars, double yellow lines, speed cameras and parking meters as they are now, where kids have little respect for the Police, who try to keep the community safe for all.

I used to love steam trains as a kid, and would cycle down to Glenfurness Road bridge, or to Meryick Park to watch them come thundering through.

OH HAPPY DAYS, NEVER TO BE REPEATED!

John F. Badcock. (March 2024).